

DOCUMENTS ON  
BRITISH  
FOREIGN POLICY  
1919—1939

EDITED BY

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# PREFACE

## TO VOLUME I, THIRD SERIES

THE decision to publish a collection of Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, was announced in the House of Commons by Mr. Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on March 29, 1944, in the following terms:

'His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have decided to publish the most important documents in the Foreign Office archives relating to British foreign policy between 1919 and 1939. The documents will be published in a series of volumes which will be issued one by one as and when they are ready. The volumes will form a continuous chronological series, but in order to make available as soon as possible documents dealing with events most relevant to the outbreak of the present war, it is proposed, for purposes of publication, to divide the work into two parts: the first part to begin with the year 1919, and the second part to begin with the year 1930. The preparation of each part will be undertaken simultaneously.'

Mr. E. L. Woodward, Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford and Fellow of Worcester College, was entrusted by the Secretary of State with the general planning and production of the Collection. Mr. Rohan Butler, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, joined Mr. Woodward as co-editor in January 1945, and has undertaken the production of the first series, while Mr. Woodward has continued the production of the second series of volumes. Since December, 1946 the Editors have had the assistance of the Hon. Margaret Lambert in their work.

In the summer of 1947 the Editors suggested to Mr. Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that, in addition to the two series of volumes which were being published concurrently, they should begin a third series. This third series would cover the period immediately preceding the outbreak of war in September 1939, i.e. it would contain the volumes which otherwise would have formed the concluding part of the second series.

The Editors made this suggestion in order to accelerate the appearance of the documents most relevant to the origins of the war. The decision to divide the Collection into two series had been taken in 1944 with a similar intention, but between 1944 and 1947 there had been an unexpectedly large publication of material (particularly at the Nuremberg trials) on pre-war international relations. Moreover, His Majesty's Government had agreed, in conjunction with the American and French Governments, to produce an important and authoritative collection of documents from German archives. In these circumstances, therefore, the Editors considered that they might serve the convenience of readers by printing the more recent British documents sooner than would have been the case on their original plan of two concurrent series.

During the latter part of 1947, therefore, Mr. Woodward, with Miss Lambert's help, began to collect material for a third series. Among other matters it was necessary to settle the date at which the series would begin. The experience in selecting the material for the first volume of the second series had shown the drawbacks of starting in any year after 1919; indeed, the Editors had been fully aware of these drawbacks when they suggested in 1944 that the Collection should be divided into two parts. If there were obvious difficulties in taking 1930 as the point of departure for the second series, the problem was harder in dealing with events between 1933 and 1939. There were arguments in favour of beginning with the German denunciation of Locarno in 1936 or with the German occupation of Prague in 1939; the first of these dates, however, was too early and the second too late to fit the purpose of the new series. After considering various dates between the summer of 1936 and the signature of the Munich agreement in 1938, Mr. Woodward came to the conclusion that the least inconvenient date would be March 9, 1938, i.e. the day on which Dr. Schuschnigg announced that a plebiscite would be held in Austria.

In the early part of the present year the collection of material had reached a stage in which it was possible for the Editors to put their proposals in a definite and detailed form to the Secretary of State. Mr. Bevin approved of the plan and the announcement of the third series was made in the House of Commons on May 3, 1948.

The present volume thus covers the period from March 9, 1938 to the acceptance by the Czechoslovak Government on July 23, 1938, of the suggestion made to them by His Majesty's Government that Lord Runciman should go on a special mission to Prague. Volume II in the third series will continue the record to the signature of the Munich agreement. These two volumes will deal almost entirely with the situation created by the German move against Austria and the subsequent development of the crisis over the Sudeten question; documents dealing primarily with other subjects, e.g. Spain, Italy, and the Far East, will be printed in other volumes.

As previously stated, the Editors, in undertaking to produce the Collection, asked for unreserved access to the Foreign Office archives and for complete freedom in the selection and arrangement of their material. These conditions have been fulfilled to the entire satisfaction of the Editors.

The Editors think it necessary to point out that, as explained in the preface to Volume I of each of the two previous Series in this Collection, their purpose is to provide from the Foreign Office archives a full documentation of the course and execution of policy, i.e. to show what British policy was—what was done or attempted—and also to give, within reasonable limits of space, the information received from Missions abroad upon which from time to time decisions of policy were taken.

The Collection, which thus follows the pattern set by other standard Collections of diplomatic documents, does not aim at a complete record of the processes of formulation of policy as distinct from its execution. In order

to be complete a record of the formulation of British policy would have to include an account of discussions and divergencies of view in the Cabinet and between Departments or individuals. There are obvious reasons of constitutional propriety why the publication of such British records, after so short a lapse of time, is impracticable on a scale which the Editors would regard as adequate or as comparable with the scale upon which they have been able to describe the *res gestae* of His Majesty's Government in the sphere of foreign affairs.

A few names and personal references or statements of opinion have been omitted from the printed text of documents in this volume. In every case attention has been called in a footnote to the omissions. The omissions have been made on the responsibility of the Editor of the volume; the reason for them has been the necessity to protect the interests of living persons of non-British nationality.

As in previous volumes the Editor wishes to thank the staff of the Reference Room of the Library for their valuable help in tracing documents, and often in suggesting lines of exploration which have proved most fruitful. The Editor is also very grateful to Miss E. McIntosh, M.B.E., of the Foreign Office, for continued secretarial work, including the preparation of the table of contents for this volume.

The contents of the six chapters of the present volume may be summarized as follows:

Chapter I deals with the attitude of His Majesty's Government to the German invasion and annexation of Austria and with the German assurances to the Czechoslovak Government.

Chapter II covers the period from March 16 to April 26 during which it became increasingly clear that, in spite of their assurances, the German Government intended to force a settlement of the Sudeten question. His Majesty's Government therefore approached the Czechoslovak and French Governments with a view to discussion, and also made in the House of Commons a statement of their own attitude.

Chapter III contains the records of Anglo-French conversations in London on April 28-9. At these conversations it was decided that the military situation which would result from a German attack on Czechoslovakia made it most desirable to urge the Czechoslovak Government to try without delay to reach agreement with the Sudeten Germans. At the same time it was agreed that His Majesty's Government should inform the German Government of their action at Prague and ask for German co-operation in reaching a peaceful settlement. If necessary His Majesty's Government would warn the German Government of the consequences of aggression against Czechoslovakia.

It became necessary to give this warning within a very short time. Chapter IV describes the crisis of May 19-22 when there appeared to be evidence that the Germans intended a *coup* against Czechoslovakia. The negotiations

in Czechoslovakia, however, were continued, and His Majesty's Government went on with their efforts to hasten the offer of far-reaching concessions by the Czechoslovak Government and also to persuade the Germans to use on the side of moderation their controlling influence with the Sudeten party.

Chapter V brings the story to July 14. At this date it became clear that the negotiations had reached a deadlock, and that there was increasing danger of German military action which might result in a European war. His Majesty's Government therefore decided to put forward a plan which, in various forms, they had been considering for some time. They proposed to send Lord Runciman to Prague as an independent mediator in the hope that he might bring the two parties together to accept a solution of their differences.

Chapter VI gives the correspondence with the Czechoslovak Government over this proposal and their final acceptance of it on July 23. The chapter contains an account of the visit of Captain Wiedemann, a confidant of Herr Hitler, to London on July 18, and also a summary of information regarding German military preparations.

The appendixes include (i) correspondence between Lord Halifax and Sir N. Henderson in addition to the letters included elsewhere in the text of the volume; (ii) records of Herr Henlein's statements to Mr. Churchill, Sir A. Sinclair, and Sir R. Vansittart while on a visit to London in May, 1938; (iii) memoranda explaining the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans in June, 1938; (iv) a Foreign Office memorandum setting out considerations for and against proposals for the neutralization of Czechoslovakia; (v) the record of a conversation between Sir A. Cadogan and Herr Forster, Gauleiter of Danzig.

E. L. WOODWARD

November, 1948.

# NOTE

## TO VOLUME I, THIRD SERIES

FOR the convenience of readers reprints are included in this volume of (i) paragraphs 1-3 of a note in Volume I, Second Series, describing shortly the general procedure of the Foreign Office with regard to telegrams and despatches: (ii) a note in Volume II, Second Series, explaining the method adopted with regard to the timing of incoming and outgoing telegrams.

### (i) NOTE TO VOLUME I, SECOND SERIES

The following general notes may be of use to readers of the documents in this Collection.

#### 1. Unless otherwise stated in the Collection,

- (a) All communications received in the Foreign Office from His Majesty's Missions abroad are addressed to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
- (b) All communications sent by the Foreign Office to Missions abroad are sent to the Head or Acting Head of the Mission.
- (c) All British officials mentioned in the documents are members of the Foreign Office or, as the context shows, of His Majesty's Missions abroad.

2. Records of conversations between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs or members of the Foreign Office and representatives of a foreign Government in London and copies of communications from foreign Governments are normally sent to the Head or Acting Head of His Majesty's Mission in the country concerned. For this purpose the record of the conversation is drafted in the form of a telegram or despatch. A similar practice is followed by His Majesty's Missions abroad in transmitting communications from foreign Governments or information to the Secretary of State. The character and urgency of the business decide the choice between a telegram or despatch. A telegram is usually followed by a despatch giving a fuller account of the conversation or communication, but in cases where a long telegram or succession of telegrams has been sent or received, it may not be necessary to follow them with a despatch or despatches.

In order to avoid duplication and at the same time not to exclude material of importance, the editor has adopted the following rules with regard to the printing of telegrams and despatches covering the same business.

- (a) A telegram is printed when action was taken or a reply sent before the receipt of a despatch.
- (b) The later despatch is also printed if it contains relevant matter not included in the telegram.
- (c) A telegram is not printed if no action was taken on it and no reply sent before the receipt of a despatch.



- (d) A despatch is not printed if it is merely confirmatory and adds nothing to the information already sent by telegram.

It should be added that records are made of all important telephone conversations and that these records are treated similarly to the records of conversations or of communications.

3. Confirmatory copies of all telegrams from His Majesty's Missions are sent later by diplomatic bag. In normal cases the records in the Foreign Office archives are checked and, if necessary, corrected from these confirmatory telegrams. At times of great pressure of business, or when there is a continuous exchange of telegrams and minor mistakes of transmission would have lost their relevance before the arrival of confirmatory copies, those copies are not always sent. Hence there are passages in the telegrams printed in this collection where the text is uncertain. These *lacunae* are all of a minor kind, since in cases of doubt about the meaning or accuracy of transmission of a telegram the Mission from which the telegram has been received is asked at once to confirm the text by telegram and, if necessary, an amended copy is circulated. In such cases, unless action has been taken on the original text, the amended copy is printed in this Collection.

There is no difficulty in establishing or checking the text of outward telegrams since the authorized drafts as well as the transmitted texts are kept in the Foreign Office archives.

#### (ii) NOTE TO VOLUME II, SECOND SERIES

In order to make clear the sequence of events it has been necessary to give the hour as well as the day of despatch and receipt of certain telegrams printed in this volume.

It should be pointed out, however, that the hour of receipt of a cyphered telegram in the Foreign Office means the hour at which this telegram was handed to the Department responsible for the work of decyphering. Immediately after a telegram has been decyphered copies of it are made and put into circulation. Telegrams are normally decyphered at once, but delays may occur in the case of sudden and unexpected pressure of business. There is thus a short interval between the hour of receipt marked on the telegram and the time at which it is actually read by the Secretary of State or by officials of the Department.

The hour of despatch marked on a telegram, whether from the Foreign Office or from H.M. Missions abroad, is the hour at which the telegram, after being cyphered, is sent for transmission to its destination. Here again an interval must be reckoned between the delivery of the telegram to the cyphering department and the actual hour of despatch.

If account is taken of those two minor 'time-lags' it will be clear why an out-going telegram seems at times to take no account of an incoming telegram received before the despatch of the former.

The hour of despatch, in the case of telegrams from H.M. Missions abroad, is always local time.

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# CHAPTER SUMMARIES

## CHAPTER I

### Attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the German annexation of Austria: German assurances to the Czechoslovak Government (March 9-16, 1938)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 54	Mar. 9	Reports decision of Austrian Chancellor to hold a plebiscite.	1
2	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 55	Mar. 9	Reports Chancellor's reasons for holding plebiscite.	1
3	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 58	Mar. 9	Reports principal points of Chancellor's speech at Innsbruck in which he announced holding of plebiscite.	2
4	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 82	Mar. 10	Reports Chancellor's announcement of plebiscite on March 13 likely to arouse great storm in Berlin.	3
5	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 83	Mar. 10	Reports press announcement of plebiscite in Austria.	3
6	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 60	Mar. 10	Reports decision of Austrian Nazis to take no part in plebiscite.	4
7	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 59	Mar. 10	Reports that Political Director looks forward to result of plebiscite with confidence.	4
8	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 70	Mar. 10	Conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop in which Secretary of State laid stress on dangers of German policy in respect of Austria and Czechoslovakia.	4
9	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 71	Mar. 10	Views of Herr von Ribbentrop regarding proposed plebiscite in Austria:—suggestion that H.M.G. might urge Austrian Chancellor to cancel plebiscite.	5
10	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. Unnumbered	Mar. 11	Reports closing of German-Austrian frontier and troop movements on German side.	6
11	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 61	Mar. 11	Reports reopening of Tyrol-Vorarlberg frontier. Minister of Interior has left for Berlin to explain necessity for plebiscite.	7
12	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 62	Mar. 11	Reports official announcement that all rumours regarding postponement of plebiscite were unfounded.	7
13	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 85	Mar. 11	Reports information from H.M. Consul-General, Munich, about general mobilization in Bavaria and movement of troops towards Austrian frontier.	7

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
14	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 84	Mar. 11	Reports opinion on plebiscite unpromisingly hostile and fears Herr Hitler may yield to extremist advice.	8
15	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 73	Mar. 11	Instructions to convey to Herr Hitler warnings given to Herr von Ribbentrop regarding Austrian situation.	8
16	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 86	Mar. 11	States that instructions in No. 15 will be carried out through Baron von Neurath in first instance.	8
17	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 65	Mar. 11	Reports that Chancellor has been presented with ultimatum from Minister of Interior and Dr. von Glaise-Horstenau demanding abandonment of plebiscite.	9
18	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 87	Mar. 11	Reports that according to Ministry of War no orders have been issued for troop movements but information received from H.M. Consuls and others point to contrary position.	9
19	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 67	Mar. 11	Reports that Chancellor has cancelled plebiscite on March 13; Dr. Schuschnigg has been told to resign and asks for immediate advice of H.M.G.	10
20	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 66	Mar. 11	Reports that situation is critical.	10
21	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 68	Mar. 11	Reports threat of Minister of Interior to resign if cancellation of plebiscite not agreed to by 3 o'clock.	11
22	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 69	Mar. 11	Reports that German <i>démenti</i> of ultimatum is untrue; if answers not satisfactory German troops to be set in action.	11
23	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 88	Mar. 11	Reports visits of Austrian Minister and French Ambassador.	12
24	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 89	Mar. 11	Transmits text of unofficial statement from Deutsche Nachrichten Büro denying ultimatum to Austria and abnormal troop movements.	12
25	TO MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 31	Mar. 11	States that Herr von Ribbentrop has been told of effect which would be produced in U.K. by demand for resignation of Austrian Chancellor. H.M.G. cannot take responsibility of advising Chancellor in matter.	13
26	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 70	Mar. 11	Reports Chancellor has not yet replied to ultimatum: Austrian Government trying to gain time.	13
27	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 74	Mar. 11	Reports information from Ministry for Foreign Affairs that when French Chargé d'Affaires in Rome applied for interview with Count Ciano latter refused to see him if object of interview was Austria.	14
28	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 84	Mar. 11	Instructions to seek immediate interview with Signor Mussolini and inform him of action taken by H.M.G. in No. 25.	14

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
29	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 77	Mar. 11	Instructions to communicate at once to German Government language held to Herr von Ribbentrop in No. 25.	14
30	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 71	Mar. 11	Reports terms of official ultimatum brought by aeroplane from Germany.	15
31	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 93	Mar. 11	Reports that instructions contained in No. 29 have been carried out.	15
32	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 92	Mar. 11	Reports he has spoken to Baron von Neurath in sense of instructions contained in No. 15: latter promised to convey message to Chancellor.	15
33	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 72	Mar. 11	Reports resignation of Dr. Schuschnigg.	16
34	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 95	Mar. 11	Reports information given to Assistant Military Attaché by Ministry of War that in view of political situation a considerable force had been concentrated on Austrian frontier.	16
35	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 73	Mar. 11	Reports that President had refused to accept German ultimatum and that German troops were marching into Austria.	17
36	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 74	Mar. 11	Transmits text of Chancellor's farewell broadcast.	17
37	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 94	Mar. 11	Reports total of over 3,000 armed police in convoys on Berlin-Leipzig road.	18
38	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 77	Mar. 11	Transmits text of official statement to effect that Herr Seyss-Inquart has assumed charge of Government at demand of Germany.	18
39	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 79	Mar. 11	Instructions to convey to German Government protest in strongest terms if report of presentation of ultimatum to Austria is correct.	18
40	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 75	Mar. 11	Reports that Austrian Ministry of War has no confirmation of any German troops having crossed frontier: no opposition is to be offered if German Army marches in.	19
41	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 96	Mar. 11	Reports announcement by Deutsche Nachrichten Büro that Herr Seyss-Inquart has appealed to German Government to send troops to keep order.	19
42	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 91	Mar. 11	Transmits report from Consul-General, Munich, stating that mobilization orders were issued at midnight on March 10 and concentration began at 1 a.m. March 11.	19
43	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 129	Mar. 11	Reports statement by French Chargé d'Affaires that Count Ciano had refused to see him.	20

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
44	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 331	Mar. 11	Transmits account of representations made to Herr von Ribbentrop following receipt of telegrams announcing request for Dr. Schuschnigg's resignation.	21
45	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 131	Mar. 12	States that he will ask for interview with Signor Mussolini through Count Ciano but if latter deprecates request he will telegraph for further instructions.	23
46	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 97	Mar. 12	Reports that instructions contained in No. 39 have been carried out. At interview with Field-Marshal Göring latter stated German troops were now entering Austria, but would be withdrawn as soon as situation stable, when free elections would be held.	23
47	TO BARON VON NEURATH Berlin	Mar. 11	Letter from Sir N. Henderson conveying protest of H.M.G. regarding ultimatum delivered to Austria.	24
48	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 98	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 46 and states that, although it will be possible to see General Göring on March 13, nothing short of force will have any effect.	25
49	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 101	Mar. 12	Regrets failure of efforts to prevent series of events as regards Austria, but states everything was done that could be done short of direct threat of force.	25
50	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 100	Mar. 12	Reports that Dr. Goebbels received foreign Press on March 12 at 11 a.m. and read proclamation by Herr Hitler to be issued on wireless at noon.	26
51	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 85	Mar. 12	Reports that approximately 2,000 German troops fully equipped have been landed at Aspern by transport planes; German and Austrian troops fraternising.	27
52	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 89	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 45 and agrees to raising question of Austria with Count Ciano if latter deprecates interview with Signor Mussolini.	27
53	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 138	Mar. 12	Reports interview with Count Ciano: latter indicated it would be unwise to press for interview with Signor Mussolini.	27
54	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 82	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 46 and regrets Sir N. Henderson's reference to Dr. Schuschnigg in conversation with Field-Marshal Göring: asks that in future Sir N. Henderson does not go beyond instructions received.	29
55	TO MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 37	Mar. 12	Instructions to take any opportunity that offers to impress upon authorities that maltreatment of Jews or Socialists will deepen painful impression in U.K. caused by recent events.	30
56	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 104	Mar. 12	Transmits reply of Baron von Neurath to letter of protest on events in Austria.	30

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
57	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 68	Mar. 12	Instructions to inform French Government that H.M.G. consider it useless to place question of Austria before League of Nations.	32
58	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 83	Mar. 12	Instructions to inform German Government that H.M.G. has taken note of assurances given by Field-Marshal Göring regarding withdrawal of troops as soon as situation is stable and regarding the holding of free elections.	32
59	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 84	Mar. 12	Agrees that nothing short of direct threat of force would have altered course of events.	33
60	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 98	Mar. 12	Refers to No. 53 and agrees that in circumstances there was no object in pressing for interview with Signor Mussolini.	33
61	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 93	Mar. 12	Transmits account of conversation of Secretary of State with Czechoslovak Minister regarding German-Czech relations.	33
62	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 505	Mar. 12	Account of conversation of Secretary of State with French Ambassador stressing need for consultation of French Government and H.M.G. on current problems.	35
63	CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Mar. 12	Note to Secretary of State informing him of statements made to Czech Minister in Berlin by Field-Marshal Göring to effect that events in Austria would in no way have detrimental influence on German-Czech relations.	36
64	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 140	Mar. 12	Reports attitude of Italian Government towards events in Austria: Rome-Berlin Axis not weakened.	37
65	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 93	Mar. 13	States that tactics of Dr. Schuschnigg in proclaiming plebiscite may have been wrong but latter's motives totally unself-seeking and patriotic.	38
66	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 96	Mar. 13	Reports that whole administration of Austria has been taken over by new régime and nazification of country proceeding rapidly.	38
67	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 106	Mar. 13	Reports that instructions contained in No. 58 have been carried out.	39
68	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 105	Mar. 13	Refers to No. 54 and explains his attitude in conversation with Field-Marshal Göring.	39
69	TO MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 39	Mar. 13	Asks for confirmation of fact that ultimatum to Austrian Government originated in and was brought from Germany.	40
70	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 98	Mar. 13	Transmits observations on letter from Baron von Neurath (No. 56) regarding events in Austria.	40



71	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 87	Mar. 13	Instructions to inform German Government that assurances given to Czechoslovak Minister by Field-Marshal Göring have been communicated to H.M.G. and to ask for permission to make them public.	40
72	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 80	Mar. 13	Reports that Minister for Foreign Affairs agrees that no good purpose would be served by bringing Austrian question before League of Nations, but that M. Paul Boncour who would be taking over post of Minister for Foreign Affairs the next day might take a different view.	41
73	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 88	Mar. 13	States Prime Minister and Secretary of State intend to read out in both Houses of Parliament on March 14 German Government's reply (No. 56) to H.M.G.'s protest.	42
74	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 106	Mar. 13	Reports ill-treatment of Jews and anti-Nazis already beginning.	42
75	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 109	Mar. 13	Reports that law has been passed according to which Austria is now a province of German Reich and that a plebiscite on question of reunion with Germany will be held on April 10.	42
76	MR. PALAIRET Vienna Tel. No. 111	Mar. 14	Reports that incorporation of Austria in the Reich has been greeted with enthusiasm by population. Herr Hitler to visit Vienna on March 14.	43
77	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 108	Mar. 14	Reports solemn assurance again received from Field-Marshal Göring that plebiscite to be held on April 10 will be free and impartial.	43
78	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 111	Mar. 14	Reports conversation with Baron von Neurath on situation in Austria; latter undertook to use his influence to prevent excesses.	44
79	STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER	Mar. 14	Text of statement by Prime Minister in House of Commons.	44
80	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 115	Mar. 15	Transmits Press comments on Prime Minister's speech.	48
81	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 84	Mar. 15	Reports conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs in which latter urged that H.M.G. should make declaration that, if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia and France went to her aid, Great Britain would stand by France.	50
82	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 525	Mar. 15	Transmits text of Note regarding Czechoslovakia left by French Ambassador at Foreign Office.	50
83	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 530	Mar. 15	Transmits record of conversation of Secretary of State with French Ambassador regarding Czechoslovakia.	52

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
84	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 164 Saving	Mar. 15	Reports that according to semi-official announcement in Press first person received by new M.F.A. was Czechoslovak Minister in Paris: universally accepted that previous French assurances regarding military assistance to Czechoslovakia in event of an attack have been renewed.	53
85	VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 72	Mar. 15	Reports conversation with M. Litvinov in which latter stated his opinion that Herr Hitler having now annexed Austria would soon proceed to deal with Czechoslovakia.	54
86	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 17 Saving	Mar. 15	Reports his opinion that attention of Germany will soon be turned to Czechoslovakia and transmits observations regarding position of that country.	55
87	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 253	Mar. 15	Transmits report on events leading to overthrow of Austrian independence.	56
88	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 118	Mar. 16	Reports has heard that German Nazi extremists have taken over complete control in Austria.	59

## CHAPTER II

### Attitude of His Majesty's Government with regard to possible German action against Czechoslovakia: approach to French and Czechoslovak Governments (March 16-April 26, 1938)

89	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 31	Mar. 16	Transmits reports received by Czechoslovak General Staff regarding German military activity: no measures as yet taken by Czechoslovak Government.	61
90	SOVIET AMBASSADOR London	Mar. 17	Transmits text of a statement made by M. Litvinov to representatives of the Press in Moscow regarding the Soviet Union's willingness to participate in collective action against aggression and to consider in conjunction with other States measures for dealing with situation.	62
91	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 32	Mar. 17	Reports that Herr Henlein has published appeal to all Sudeten Germans to join Sudeten German Party. German Agrarian Party have decided to sever connexion with Central Office of German Activist Parties.	64
92	VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow Tel. No. 73	Mar. 17	Reports that M. Litvinov gave an interview to foreign journalists on March 15 and informed them that U.S.S.R. would intervene in defence of Czechoslovakia if France did.	65



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
93	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 125	Mar. 17	Reports visit of Czechoslovak Minister who was perturbed at failure of German Press to make any reference to assurances given by Field-Marshal Göring regarding Czechoslovakia: hoped that Herr Hitler would mention matter in Reichstag speech on March 18.	65
94	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 35	Mar. 17	Reports statement by Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Czechoslovak Government was satisfied that no dangerous concentration of German troops was taking place.	66
95	MR. MACK Vienna Tel. No. 149	Mar. 19	Reports that German authorities are consolidating their position in Austria by establishing German control of every branch of country's life.	67
96	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 43	Mar. 19	Reports President Benes' opinion that Czechoslovakia was in no immediate danger.	67
97	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 69	Mar. 22	Transmits report by H.M. Consul, Liberec, of 19 March, respecting effect of German absorption of Austria on Sudeten Germans.	68
98	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 29 Saving	Mar. 19	Reports that from Sudeten German Press it seems clear that minds of party are thinking of actual incorporation in Reich and moving away from thoughts of mere autonomy.	71
99	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 47	Mar. 20	Reports conversation with President Benes during which latter stated that German Minister had asked in February whether Czechoslovakia would be prepared to negotiate separately with Germany.	72
100	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 48	Mar. 20	Reports President Benes' observations regarding Czechoslovak Government's efforts to deal with German minority problem.	73
101	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 31 Saving	Mar. 21	Reports further conversation with President Benes regarding position of Czechoslovakia and ambitions of Germany.	74
102	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 34 Saving	Mar. 22	Reports that foreign correspondents in Prague were to be asked, in interests of Czechoslovakia, to restrain their criticisms of events in Austria.	76
103	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 67	Mar. 22	Reports views of Dr. Hodza, Czechoslovak President of Council, on steps to be taken towards dealing with Sudeten German problem.	76
104	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 68	Mar. 22	Reports observations of Dr. Hodza, Czechoslovak President of Council, on international situation and need for plan to prevent Germany's domination of South-eastern Europe.	78
105	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 339	Mar. 22	Transmits memorandum on recent events in Austria left by Dr. Woermann with Sir A. Cadogan and account of conversation.	80

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
106	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 581 •	Mar. 22	Transmits memorandum for confidential information of French Govt. on H.M.G.'s views regarding absorption of Austria by Germany and conclusions which they would draw in view of possibility of similar action regarding Czechoslovakia.	82
107	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 95	Mar. 23	Transmits further observations which may be used when presenting memorandum in No. 106 to French Government.	86
108	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 96	Mar. 23	Instructions to take action on Nos. 106 and 107.	88
109	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 603	Mar. 23	Transmits record of conversation of Secretary of State with French Ambassador regarding international situation with special reference to Czechoslovakia.	88
110	To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 42 •	Mar. 23	Instructions to make urgent communication to Czechoslovak Government setting forth obligations of Great Britain towards Czechoslovakia which are those of one member of League of Nations to another. H.M.G. would, however, be glad to exchange views on minority problem.	90
111	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 282	Mar. 23	Transmits copy of a despatch from Military Attaché respecting increases in the German Army.	92
112	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 97	Mar. 24	Reports action taken as instructed in Nos. 106 and 107: records preliminary observations of M. Paul-Boncour.	94
113	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 55	Mar. 24	Reports that according to Minister for Foreign Affairs number of German troops being reduced rather than increased and that Czechoslovakia has no reason to fear a German attack in the immediate future.	95
114	To H.M. Reps. Berlin • Tel. No. 107 Paris Tel. No. 97 Washington Tel. No. 202 Prague Tel. No. 43 Budapest Tel. No. 21	Mar. 24	Transmits text of passage from Prime Minister's speech in House of Commons on March 24 respecting obligations of United Kingdom in regard to Czechoslovakia.	95
115	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 286	Mar. 24	Transmits observations on aims and designs of Herr Hitler and lessons to be learnt from events of past fortnight.	97
116	VISCOUNT HALIFAX	Mar. 24	Letter to Soviet Ambassador acknowledging No. 90: states that H.M.G. do not regard Soviet proposal as likely to have a favourable effect upon the prospects of European peace.	101

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
117	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 40 Saving	Mar. 25	Reports that according to Minister for Foreign Affairs Czechoslovak Government were satisfied with British sympathy and understanding; considers that Czechs rely on their French alliance and eventual British support for France.	102
118	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 41 Saving	Mar. 25	Reports conversation with President Benes in which mention was made of defection of German Activists from Government.	102
119	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 155 Saving	Mar. 29	Transmits text of passage in Herr Hitler's speech on March 28 which dealt with Germans separated from the Reich: reference to Czechoslovakia very thinly veiled.	103
120	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 85	Mar. 29	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché on military position in Czechoslovakia resulting from German occupation of Austria.	103
121	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 324	Apr. 1	Reports opinion that Herr Hitler's next main object is settlement at all costs of Sudeten question and urges that there should be no delay in attempting to find a peaceful solution.	108
122	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 59	Apr. 2	Reports that Czechoslovak Government, in response to an authorized suggestion made to Czechoslovak Minister in London, are working out a plan to meet wishes of German minority which they will submit to French and British Governments.	112
123	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 48	Apr. 2	Transmits details regarding suggestion made by Sir S. Hoare to Czechoslovak Minister in London.	113
124	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 56 Saving	Apr. 2	Reports that proposals of Czechoslovak Government for dealing with minority problem are to be discussed and approved by Cabinet before being communicated to him.	114
125	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 152	Apr. 5	States that he has no reason to believe that there is any particular urgency about Czechoslovak proposals for settling minority problem: regards it as more important that reforms should be radical.	115
126	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 61	Apr. 5	Reports conversation with German Minister on Sudeten German question.	116
127	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 63	Apr. 5	Reports conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding Czechoslovak proposals for dealing with minority question.	117
128	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 329	Apr. 5	Transmits despatch from H.M. Consul-General at Munich upon public opinion with regard to union of Austria with Germany.	118
129	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 99	Apr. 6	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché giving an account of his observations on a recent tour of the fortifications on the northern Czechoslovak frontier.	120

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
130	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 100	Apr. 6	Transmits copy despatch from H.M. Consul, Libercc, describing state of opinion in Sudeten German areas.	122
131	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 73	Apr. 8	Reports interview with Czechoslovak President of Council in which latter spoke of his negotiations with Henlein Party representatives.	125
132	MR. MACK Vienna No. 107	Apr. 8	Transmits an account of events leading up to German <i>coup</i> against Austria and text of Dr. Schuschnigg's radio announcement of his resignation.	126
133	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 49	Apr. 9	States that it is not clear whether scheme which Czechoslovak Government intend to submit to H.M.G. will have been discussed with Henlein Party or whether it will be in form of proposals which Czechoslovak Government intend to put before that Party.	137
134	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 68 Saving	Apr. 11	Summarizes observations contained in later despatch (No. 140) on present position of Czechoslovakia and suggests possibility of neutralization.	138
135	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 727	Apr. 11	Transmits further views of H.M.G. for information of French Government regarding present dangerous situation in Czechoslovakia caused by German Sudeten question.	140
136	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 433	Apr. 11	Transmits reply of French Government to aide-mémoire handed to M. Paul-Boncour on 24 March as result of instructions in Nos. 106 and 107.	143
137	MR. MACK Vienna No. 110	Apr. 11	Transmits report on plebiscite held on April 10 for reunion of Austria with Germany.	146
138	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 52	Apr. 12	Instructions to seek an early audience of President Benes in order to discuss German minority question with him.	149
139	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 53	Apr. 12	Instructions to correct any misapprehension which Czechoslovak Government may have about Prime Minister's statement in House on March 24.	150
140	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 107	Apr. 12	Fuller statement of views with regard to position of Czechoslovakia and possibility of neutralization.	151
141	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 365	Apr. 12	Transmits report on plebiscite held on April 10 for reunion of Austria with Germany.	155
142	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 259 Saving	Apr. 13	Reports action taken as instructed in No. 135.	157
143	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 77	Apr. 13	Reports interview with M.F.A. regarding Sudeten German question: latter stated that proposals of Czechoslovak Government had been telegraphed to London and Paris for communication to H.M.G. and French Government.	158

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
144	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 78	Apr. 13	Further report of interview with M.F.A.	159
145	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 54	Apr. 14	States that it is not intention of H.M.G. to make any communication to German Government about Sudeten German question at present stage.	159
146	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 126	Apr. 14	Instructions to refrain from discussing Sudeten German question in any detail with German Ministers.	160
147	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 116	Apr. 14	Reports promise by M.F.A. that if H.M. Minister in Prague does not think plan to be submitted by Czechoslovak Government for settlement of Sudeten question sufficiently far-reaching, M.F.A. will instruct French Minister to join with Mr. Newton in urging modifications thereof.	160
148	VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow No. 196	Apr. 19	Transmits despatch by Military Attaché in which he gives his estimate of Red Army as a fighting force.	161
149	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 116	Apr. 19	Reports that attitude of Slovak People's Party is causing embarrassment to Czechs.	166
150	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 117	Apr. 19	Transmits, with observations, proposals of Czechoslovak Government for solving minority problem.	167
151	VISCOUNT CHILSTON Moscow No. 197	Apr. 19	Transmits despatch by Military Attaché of April 18 reporting discussion with Czechoslovak and French colleagues regarding steps likely to be taken by Red Army if it is called upon to fight.	172
152	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 381	Apr. 20	Reports conversation with Field-Marshal Göring during which latter deplored British attitude towards Germany.	173
153	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 387	Apr. 21	Transmits observations on series of speeches delivered by Herr Hitler during fortnight prior to holding of plebiscite and conclusions to be drawn therefrom.	176
154	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 82	Apr. 22	Reports that in course of audience President Benes stated he had now secured concurrence of Czech Coalition Parties in a far-reaching programme for dealing with Sudeten German question, details of which would be communicated to F.O. by Czechoslovak Minister.	179
155	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 83	Apr. 23	Reports that a Russian General and Colonel have arrived in Prague and are holding general discussions with General Staff.	181
156	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 84	Apr. 23	Reports information from President Benes that programme which would be communicated by Czechoslovak Government next week would be of a binding character.	181
157	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 84 Saving	Apr. 25	Transmits summary of Herr Henlein's speech at Karlsbad on April 24.	182

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
158	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 95	Apr. 26	Reports M.F.A. depressed over Herr Henlein's speech and transmits comments made by him on eight points tabled by Herr Henlein.	186
159	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 101	Apr. 26	Transmits observations on No. 157.	187
160	CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER London	Apr. 26	Memorandum on Nationality Policy of Czechoslovak Republic and legal and other measures which Czechoslovak Government now has in preparation.	188
161	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 102	Apr. 26	Reports that President of Council is less perturbed than M.F.A. over Herr Henlein's speech. Dr. Hodza stated that his policy remained one of negotiation whenever and wherever possible.	195

### CHAPTER III

Anglo-French conversations, April 28-9; instructions for proposed *démarches* at Prague and Berlin, May 4 (April 27-May 18, 1938)

162	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 128	Apr. 27	Reports statement by M.F.A. that, according to Field-Marshal Göring, Germany means to settle question of Czechoslovakia this summer. M. Bonnet thinks it essential that Great Britain and France should decide upon their action.	197
163	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 105	Apr. 28	Reports information from M.F.A. that Soviet Government, in reply to question by M. Paul-Boncour as to their attitude if France went to assistance of Czechoslovakia, stated that they would immediately honour their obligations.	197
164	ANGLO-FRENCH MEETINGS.	Apr. 28-9	Record of Anglo-French Conversations held at 10 Downing Street.	198
165	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 685	Apr. 29	Transmits information given to German Counsellor for transmission to his Government regarding question of Anglo-French staff conversations.	235
166	TO MR. NEWTON Prague No. 197	May 2	Transmits record of conversation of Secretary of State with Czechoslovak Minister during which latter was informed of conversations with French Ministers and action decided upon at the meetings.	235
167	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 170	May 3	Reports that French and U.S. Ambassadors agree with his view as to necessity of federalism for Czechoslovakia.	238
168	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 171	May 2	Reports departure of Herr Hitler for Rome on night of May 2.	239



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
169	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 692	May 3	Transmits record of conversation of Secretary of State with German Ambassador regarding Sudeten German question.	239
170	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 67	May 4	Instructions to make <i>démarche</i> in conjunction with French Minister on Sudeten German question: representations to be made orally and to M.F.A. in first place.	241
171	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 68	May 4	Refers to No. 170 and transmits material for use in <i>démarche</i> .	241
172	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 138	May 4	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that H.M.G. and French Government are using their influence in Prague to promote a peaceful settlement of Sudeten question and to express hope that German Government will use their influence with Sudeten Germans in direction of moderation.	243
173	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 139	May 4	Instructions to inform Field-Marshal Göring of decision of H.M.G. and French Government to use their influence at Prague to promote a peaceful settlement of Sudeten German question.	245
174	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 118	May 4	Instructions to inform M.F.A. of general lines of instructions contained in Nos. 170 to 173 inclusive.	246
175	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 140	May 4	Transmits record of conversation of Secretary of State with Polish Ambassador in which latter stated that Polish Government were genuinely anxious to improve relations with Czechoslovakia.	247
176	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 144	May 4	Transmits copy of despatch from H.M. Consul, Liberec, regarding situation in Sudeten German area.	248
177	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 109	May 5	Refers to No. 170 and reports that he will be unable to take joint action with French Ambassador until May 9 as latter has been summoned to Paris. . . .	251
178	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 176	May 5	Refers to No. 173 and asks whether he may make communication in question to Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead of Field-Marshal Göring as preliminary to fuller discussions with Herr von Ribbentrop.	252
179	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 136	May 5	Reports that M.F.A. concurs in instructions given to Mr. Newton in Nos. 170 and 171 and will instruct French Minister in Prague to act closely with H.M. Minister.	253
180	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 145	May 5	Supplements instructions in Nos. 172 and 173.	253
181	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 177	May 5	Summarizes reports already transmitted to F.O. dealing with German views, desiderata and intentions regarding Czechoslovakia.	255

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
182	TO MR. VEREKER Moscow No. 268	May 5	Reports conversation with Soviet Ambassador on May 5 about general line of action agreed upon with French regarding Czechoslovakia.	256
183	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 147	May 6	Refers to No. 178 and agrees that communication may be made to Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	256
184	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 180	May 6	Transmits observations on record of conversations with French Ministers in London.	257
185	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 111 Saving	May 6	Reports information from official circles that Czechoslovak Government were greatly surprised by strength of Czech and anti-Henlein German demonstrations in Sudeten districts on May 1.	258
186	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 302	May 7	Instructions to tell M.F.A. of representations being made by H.M. Minister and French Minister at Prague to Czechoslovak Government regarding Sudeten German question.	259
187	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 181	May 7	Reports communication to Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in accordance with instructions contained in No. 173.	260
188	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 111	May 7	Reports interview arranged with M.F.A. for 4 o'clock. French Minister to see M.F.A. at 5 o'clock.	261
189	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 441	May 7	Reports left note with M.F.A. describing steps being taken by H.M.G. and French Government in Prague for solution of Sudeten question and also of action which H.M.G. were taking alone in Berlin.	261
190	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 182	May 8	Refers to No. 187: has informed Czechoslovak Minister of action taken.	262
191	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 114	May 8	Reports that M.F.A. was not encouraging in his immediate reaction to representations made at interview on May 7.	262
192	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 113	May 8	Reports statement on lines indicated in No. 171 left with M.F.A.: latter said his Government would do what they could but indicated that H.M.G. might underestimate difficulties.	263
193	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 151	May 9	Instructions as to language to be held to Herr von Ribbentrop on Sudeten German question.	264
194	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 183	May 9	Reports observations made by high official of M.F.A. to a member of staff of Embassy regarding outlook for European peace.	265
195	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 150	May 9	Transmits full report of interview with M.F.A. on May 7.	265
196	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 470	May 10	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché on Czech military confidence.	271



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
197	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 81	May 10	Considers that reaction of M.F.A. to representations was disappointing and mentions complacent tone adopted by Czechoslovak press: thinks terms of communiqué misleading.	272
198	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 184	May 10	Refers to No. 193 and submits that effect of any representation to German Government will be greatly diminished if he is not given a certain latitude in expression of personal opinion.	273
199	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 442	May 10	Reports statement by Herr Hitler to Polish Ambassador in Rome that he desired to prolong present Polish-German Pact after date of expiry.	274
200	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 151	May 10	Reports letter of May 3 from Herr Frank on present situation with regard to Sudeten German question.	275
201	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 152	May 10	Reports visit of German Minister who called to discuss Sudeten German question and to make inquiries about Anglo-French <i>démarche</i> .	277
202	MR. VEREKER Moscow Tel. No. 23 Saving	May 10	Reports that according to Soviet Press of May 9 Tass message published in 'Rote Fahne' of May 1 stating that if Germans violated Czechoslovak frontier 30,000 Soviet bombers would appear over Berlin is a pure invention.	280
203	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 154	May 11	Refers to No. 198 and states that Foreign Office is of opinion that it would be better not to go beyond generalities in any conversations with German Government on question of Sudeten Germans.	281
204	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 117	May 11	Reports interview with President of Council who stated his Government had decided to do everything in their power to ensure appeasement so far as Czechoslovakian policy was concerned.	282
205	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 118	May 11	Transmits observations on No. 197.	284
206	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 185	May 12	Reports that he left statement, embodying instructions in previous telegrams, with Herr von Ribbentrop on May 11: summarizes conversation.	284
207	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 186	May 12	Reports that he has informed French Ambassador of conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop.	286
208	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 188	May 12	Reports that at end of conversation on May 11 Herr von Ribbentrop stated that once Sudeten question was settled there would be no outstanding question between Great Britain and Germany except colonies.	286

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
209	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 239 Saving	May 12	Transmits text of statement left with Herr von Ribbentrop.	287
210	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 126 Saving	May 12	Reports considerable attention given in Czech press to statement said to have been made by President Kalinin to Czech Delegation which visited Moscow on May 1, to effect that U.S.S.R. would keep her agreement with Czechoslovakia if latter were attacked.	288
211	TO MR. NEWTON Prague No. 218	May 12	Account of conversation of Czechoslovak Minister with Sir A. Cadogan regarding representations being made by H.M.G. in Prague and Berlin.	289
212	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 189	May 13	Considers German reaction to <i>aide-memoire</i> on Czechoslovakia as satisfactory as he had anticipated: all now depends on M. Benes.	290
213	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 120	May 13	Reports information from President of Council that he intends to transmit written reply to representations.	291
214	* EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 451	May 13	Reports Count Ciano's opinion that Germany was not planning any immediate surprise as regards Czechoslovakia.	291
215	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 83	May 14	States that Czechoslovak Minister expressed to Sir A. Cadogan hope that visit of Herr Henlein to London had no official character: Minister assured nothing of an official character in visit.	292
216	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 123	May 14	Reports great prominence given in Press to Herr Henlein's visit: asks to be informed of circumstances of visit.	292
217	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 125	May 14	Transmits summarized translation of communication received from Czechoslovak Government thanking H.M.G. and French Government for their interest in Czechoslovakia and emphasizing desire of Czechoslovak Government to satisfy all justified desiderata of nationalities.	293
218	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 497	May 14	Reviews ambitions and past actions of Herr Hitler and points out that serious effort should be made in interests of European peace to compound with Germany over question of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.	294
219	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 84	May 16	Transmits summary of conversations which Herr Henlein had in London with Mr. Churchill and Sir R. Vansittart.	297
220	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 85	May 16	Refers to No. 219 and transmits instructions as to language to be held to President in interview fixed for May 17.	299

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
221	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 157	May 16	Submits considerations which seem to point to impossibility of permanent solution being arrived at by cession of Sudeten German districts to Germany: is of opinion that Czechoslovak Government would be well advised to make terms with Sudeten German population.	300
222	MR. VEREKER Moscow No. 248	May 16	Reports visit, accompanied by M.A., to French Ambassador at latter's request: discussion of question of possible Russian reactions in event of German attack on Czechoslovakia.	303
223	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 128	May 17	Reports interview with President Benes lasting over three hours in which he urged latter to begin negotiations with Herr Henlein for settlement of Sudeten question.	307
224	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 140 Saving	May 17	Reports publication of manifesto signed by several hundred Czech intellectuals calling upon all citizens and political parties to maintain their unity and traditions of freedom and democracy.	309
225	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 192	May 18	Reports that Herr Hitler is expected back in Berlin on May 18: Nazi Party extremists are believed to be pressing for immediate action: hopes he may be authorized to inform Herr von Ribbentrop about progress of negotiations at Prague.	310
226	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 129	May 18	Refers to No. 223 and reports that President seemed confident in his ability to achieve a settlement: summarizes observations of President.	310
227	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 130	May 18	Suggests that Secretary of State might receive Czechoslovak Minister in London and urge upon him need for urgent action by Czechoslovak Government in attempting to find solution to Sudeten German question.	312
228	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 132	May 18	Reports information from President of Council that he is in permanent contact with Parliamentary leaders of Sudeten German Party and that he has invited Herr Henlein to meet him next week.	313
229	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 148 Saving	May 18	Summarizes exposition by President Benes of his foreign policy during course of interview on May 17.	313
230	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 39 Saving	May 18	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Czechoslovakia and attitude of certain sections of Polish press towards that country.	315
231	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 134	May 19	Reports announcement that at meeting on May 28 of Political Committee of Cabinet Minister of Interior gave report on measures adopted to preserve order and restore State authority.	316

# CHAPTER IV

The crisis of May 19-22: consideration by His Majesty's Government of the possibility of an International Commission in the event of a breakdown in the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein: Mr. Strang's visit to Prague and Berlin (May 19-30, 1938)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
232	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 193	May 19	States Acting Consul at Dresden reports that he has strong reason to believe German troops concentrating in southern Silesia and northern Austria.	317
233	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 194	May 19	Transmits telegram from Munich stating that according to information received soldiers from district of Garmisch are being moved to Czechoslovak frontier.	317
234	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 250 Saving	May 19	Reports his view of position with regard to Sudeten question.	318
235	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 251 Saving	May 19	Reports conversation with Czechoslovak Minister regarding progress of Sudeten German negotiations.	319
236	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 135	May 20	Reports that Czech Press of all parties is urging Government to take stern measures to reassert authority of State in minorities districts.	320
237	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 195	May 20	Reports tone of Press noticeably sharper in regard to Czechoslovakia and quotes message sent out by Transocean News Service.	320
238	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 137	May 20	Reports that information has reached Czechoslovak Government of a concentration of troops in Saxony.	321
239	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 161	May 20	Sends information regarding progress of negotiations at Prague for transmission to Minister for Foreign Affairs.	322
240	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 198	May 20	Reports State Secretary's observations in reply to question regarding German military activity in Saxony.	323
241	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 144	May 20	Reports that M. de Brinon has been told by Field-Marshal Göring that Czech affair would be liquidated in the summer.	324
242	TO MR. NEWTON Prague No. 238	May 20	Transmits summary of conversation of Secretary of State with Czechoslovak Minister regarding progress of negotiations for settlement of Sudeten question.	324
243	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1055	May 20	Transmits summary of conversation of Secretary of State with M. Paul Reynaud regarding urgency of obtaining settlement of Czechoslovak problem.	325
244	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 142	May 21	Reports movement of German troops towards Bavarian-Czechoslovak frontier.	327

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
245	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 143	May 21	Reports views of Czechoslovak General Staff regarding significance of German troop movements.	327
246	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 144	May 21	Reports that Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been informed officially that reports of troop concentrations in Saxony are untrue.	328
247	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 145	May 21	Reports that Czechoslovak Government have decided to call up one class: German Military Attaché visited General Staff and protested against what he described as mobilization order.	328
248	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 148 (Part I)	May 21	Reports Minister for Foreign Affairs very uneasy and of opinion that reports of German troop movements towards frontier are substantially correct: call up of one class necessary to reassure public opinion at home.	329
249	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 202	May 21	Reports interview with Herr von Ribbentrop who stated that if Czechs persisted in their present attitude they would be destroyed.	329
250	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 169	May 21	Instructions to urge German Government to use their influence with Herr Henlein to open negotiations with Czechoslovak Government and to point out dangers which would develop should a conflict arise.	331
251	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 148 (Part II)	May 21	Continuation of No. 248: reports information from M.F.A. of communication received by Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin from German Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding alleged ill-treatment of Sudeten Germans. M. Krofta gave details of incident near frontier when two Sudeten Germans were shot.	332
252	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 204	May 21	Reports carrying out of instructions in No. 250: Herr von Ribbentrop replied that British press had adopted line of greater encouragement than ever to Czechs.	333
253	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 148 (Part III)	May 21	Continuation of No. 251. Reports statements by Minister for Foreign Affairs that President Benes, and all other Czechoslovak leaders, including Army, absolutely opposed to war or adventure. Government most reluctant to take any further military measures, but it might be necessary to call up further classes.	334
254	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 205	May 21	Refers to No. 250 and reports that Herr von Ribbentrop declined to undertake to give any advice to Herr Henlein and said that if H.M.G. desired peaceful solution they should address their representations to the Czechs.	334
255	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 206	May 21	Reports visit to State Secretary who again described reports of German troop movements as unfounded: latter said Czech extremists determined to force an issue now rather than later.	335

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
256	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 145	May 21	Reports regret of French Government at Czechoslovak mobilization of two classes without consulting French Government: M.F.A. to tell Czechoslovak Minister in Paris that Czechoslovak Government must not proceed to any further mobilization without consulting French Government and H.M.G.	336
257	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 146	May 21	Thinks M. Bonnet anxious to follow any lead which H.M.G. may give at Prague with a view to averting war: if German aggression takes place France will go to Czechoslovakia's help.	336
258	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 151	May 21	Reports verbal and informal communication from Secretary of German Legation setting forth German view of recent developments.	337
259	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 155	May 21	Reports that during conversation with M.F.A. latter referred to military movements in Hungary and Poland, which, however, he was inclined to regard at present only as a threat.	338
260	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1060	May 21	Reports question from French Ambassador to Sir A. Cadogan on remark in Secretary of State's speech in House of Lords regarding possibility of understanding with Germany: explanation of Secretary of State's remark.	339
261	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 147	May 22	Reports that at Press Conference on May 21 M.F.A. reaffirmed that France would observe her treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia in the event of a German aggression.	340
262	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 96	May 22	Instructions to represent to Czechoslovak Government necessity of taking every possible precaution to prevent or minimize incidents.	340
263	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 173	May 22	Instructions to inform German Government of advice given in Prague and to impress upon them that H.M.G. was going to the utmost limits in endeavour to keep way open for peaceful solution.	341
264	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 174	May 22	Instructions to convey to Herr von Ribbentrop a personal message from Secretary of State warning him that if resort is had to forcible measures he should not count upon United Kingdom standing aside.	341
265	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 470	May 22	Reports that he has informed Count Ciano of recent developments regarding Czechoslovakia. M.F.A. was still inclined to be optimistic.	342
266	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 148	May 22	Reports that the Political Director at M.F.A. informed of contents of No. 250: latter stated French Minister in Prague had reported calling up of classes had on the whole had a good effect.	343



NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
267 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 213	May 22	Reports tone of press much more moderate and message from London published to effect that H.M.G. and French Government are doing their best at Prague to bring about peaceful solution.	343
268 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 207 (Part I)	May 22	Reports conversation with State Secretary regarding crisis: has no grounds for disbelieving German denials of troop concentrations.	344
269 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 207 (Part II)	May 22	Continuation of No. 268: reports Press and German view generally is that England refuses to see realities: urges that prominence be given in British press to such strong advice as H.M.G. may think fit to give at Prague.	345
270 MR. VEREKER Moscow Tel. No. 104	May 22	Repeats his opinion that Soviet Union is unlikely to go to war in defence of Czechoslovakia and perhaps not even in event of a general European war.	346
271 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 141	May 22	Instructions to inform Minister for Foreign Affairs of attitude of H.M.G. in event of failure to bring about a peaceful settlement of Czechoslovak question.	346
272 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 162	May 22	Transmits text of official communiqué regarding call up of one annual class of the reserves and supplementary reserves.	347
273 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 209	May 22	Reports that in absence of Herr von Ribbentrop personal message from Secretary of State was conveyed to State Secretary with a request that it should be sent on without delay. Herr von Weizsäcker receptive and helpful.	348
274 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 210	May 22	Reports that Henlein Party leaders have broken off conversations with Czechoslovak Government because military control was decreed in certain Sudeten German towns.	349
275 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 211	May 22	Suggests French Government might instruct their Ambassador in Berlin to remind German Government of Arbitration Treaty and to notify them of Czechoslovak readiness to abide by it in event of serious incident arising.	349
276 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 164	May 22	Reports spoke immediately to Prime Minister and M.F.A. in sense of instructions contained in No. 262. Both gave most sincere and emphatic assurances that everything would be done to prove desire of Czechoslovak Government to reach a peaceful solution.	350
277 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 105	May 22	Asks for views regarding report that Czechoslovak military were taking control and Government losing their authority: instructions to urge Government to make most generous offer possible.	350
278 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 38	May 22	Reports reply of Minister for Foreign Affairs to a question regarding Polish <i>démarche</i> in Prague.	351

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
279	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 143	May 22	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that H.M.G. appreciates advice given by him to Czechoslovak Government to abstain from further military preparations, and to suggest advice by French Government to countermand measures already taken.	351
280	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 178	May 22	States that he will be glad to have M.A.'s reports as soon as possible: would also be glad to have clear picture of sequence of events, e.g. relation of time between German and Czechoslovak troop movements.	352
281	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 180	May 22	Instructions to inquire whether German Government think it would be useful if H.M. Minister in Prague sent an observer to Sudeten districts to report direct on actual situation to H.M.G.	352
282	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 471	May 22	Reports interview with Count Ciano: latter thought that unless some serious incident took place, Czechoslovak question could be settled peacefully: hinted that Italian Government might possibly be able to do something to help.	353
283	MR. NEWTON Prague • Tel. No. 170	May 22	Reports informed President of Council and M.F.A. that in view of H.M. Ambassador in Berlin situation was extremely serious and that if there were any more incidents and bloodshed nothing would stop German Government from intervention.	354
284	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 811	May 22	Transmits account of conversation with German Ambassador regarding Czechoslovak situation: Herr von Dirksen stated that German Foreign Office wished him to urge that pressure should be exercised in Prague.	355
285	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1071	May 22	Transmits account of conversation with French Ambassador in which Sec. of State emphasized that H.M.G. was not bound to join France if latter went to assistance of Czechoslovakia.	356
286	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 150	May 23	Reports that he has explained attitude of H.M.G. to M.F.A. who said French Government would not take any action which might result in exposing them to German attack without consultation with H.M.G.	357
287	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 212	May 23	Reports result of Military Attaché's tour: no indication of any troop concentrations or unusual movements.	358
288	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 171	May 23	Reports that M.F.A. has been informed that Herr Hitler intends to send two wreaths to be laid by German Military Attaché on occasion of funeral of two men shot at Eger.	358
289	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 214	May 23	Reports that he has been unable to secure any evidence of troop movements; suggests that Military Attaché should telegraph his appreciation at an early date.	359



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
290	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 152	May 23	Reports confidence of M.F.A. that Czechoslovak Government will be guided by his advice regarding further military measures: doubts whether they can countermand measures already taken.	360
291	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 172	May 23	Refers to No. 288: reports further comments of M.F.A. on affair at Eger: has suggested to M.F.A. that Czechoslovak Government might be represented at funeral.	360
292	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 149	May 23	Instructions to point out to French Government that in view of reassuring character of reports regarding German troop concentrations suggestion might be made to Czechoslovak Government to countermand some of their military measures.	361
293	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 111	May 23	Instructions to represent to Czechoslovak Government that best policy would be to come forward with the most generous offer and attempt to clinch a settlement.	362
294	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 218	May 23	Reports that M.F.A. feels that if proposed despatch of an observer would have effect of avoiding further incidents it would be useful: withdrawal of Czechoslovak troops from frontier would improve atmosphere.	362
295	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 217	May 23	Stresses urgent necessity for Czechoslovak Government to produce a comprehensive scheme of reform and reports statement in this sense to Czechoslovak Minister.	362
296	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 153	May 23	Reports that M.F.A. will instruct French Minister at Prague to urge Czechoslovak Government to proceed with demobilization of two classes.	363
297	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 220	May 24	Reports visit of Polish Ambassador who spontaneously gave assurances as regards general attitude of his country.	364
298	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 180	May 24	Reports information from President of Council that Herr Henlein has promised to formulate his demands in writing by end of the week.	365
299	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 193 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 115	May 24	States that Mr. Strang will be visiting Prague and Berlin.	365
300	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 329	May 24	Approves action and language described in No. 282.	366
301	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 156	May 24	Reports that M.F.A. has urged Czechoslovak Minister in Paris to return to Prague and impress on M. Benes necessity for acting quickly and generously.	366

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
302	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 181	May 24	Reports decision to call up one class of reserves taken with full consent of Cabinet: measure has since enhanced Government's authority.	367
303	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 474	May 24	Reports that Count Ciano believes that provided Czechoslovak Government were reasonable and did not create fresh difficulties, a <i>détente</i> could be achieved.	367
304	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 162 Saving	May 24	Reports his view that while German troop movements might have been exaggerated, Czechoslovak action in calling up one class of reserves was justified.	368
305	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 836	May 24	Transmits summary of conversation with German Ambassador in which Secretary of State (i) asked that German press might be urged to adopt a more conciliatory tone in present crisis and (ii) discussed general situation.	369
306	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 185	May 25	Reports that Henlein party are finding excuses to postpone acceptance of a definite and formal invitation to negotiate: has serious doubt as to good faith of German Government.	371
307	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 186 (Part I)	May 25	Transmits details of conversation of President of Council with Herr Henlein: latter declared he was ready to negotiate but not until military measures had been revoked: contact was, however, to be maintained.	372
308	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 186 (Part II)	May 25	Reports reasons why President of Council is unwilling to revoke military measures, and transmits request that H.M.G. would use their influence to persuade German Government to help and not hinder negotiations.	373
309	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 187	May 25	Reports that in reply to question by President of Council as to Germany's intentions he gave his opinion that Germany was determined to have a thorough settlement, and that only a few weeks were left in which to achieve a peaceful one.	374
310	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 194	May 25	Discusses reply of German Government in No. 294: states that he proposes to consult H.M. Minister at Prague as to value and feasibility of keeping an observer at Prague in readiness to proceed to investigate any serious incident.	374
311	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 118	May 25	Refers to No. 310 and asks for views.	375
312	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 119	May 25	Asks whether Czechoslovak Government are now demobilizing any of reservists called up or withdrawing troops from frontier.	375
313	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 230	May 25	Comments on German aims and reports his opinion that German Government will refuse to advise Herr Henlein to waive condition regarding withdrawal of military measures.	376

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
314	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 196	May 25	Reports renewed representations on May 24 to President of Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs who both seemed convinced of importance of advice of H.M.G.: M.F.A. had impressed on Cabinet that danger was not over or even diminished.	377
315	TO MR. NEWTON Prague No. 262	May 25	Conversation of Secretary of State with Czechoslovak Minister in the course of which Secretary of State put forward various suggestions for the future of Czechoslovakia which the Czechoslovak Government might consider.	378
316	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 528	May 25	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché on question of German troop movements and their relation to Czechoslovak crisis.	380
317	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 200	May 26	Reports that U.S. Military Attaché considered that German Legation had expected a coup over the week-end: this view coincides with belief of M.F.A. that something in form of ultimatum was in preparation at German Legation.	381
318	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 237	May 26	Reports his opinion that it would not be politic to ask German Government to recommend Herr Henlein to waive condition regarding military measures: suggests best course would be to induce Czechoslovak Government to agree to release troops immediately after next Sunday's elections.	382
319	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 204	May 26	Refers to No. 318 and states that he will try to induce Czechoslovak Government to agree to release troops and will endeavour to enlist French support.	382
320	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 121	May 26	Expresses view that things will become more difficult unless concrete basis for negotiations with Herr Henlein can be found by May 28 at latest: suggests that it may be an advantage to have Herr Henlein's demands in writing: instructs Mr. Newton to represent these views to Czechoslovak Government.	383
321	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 161	May 26	Instructions to suggest to M.F.A. that French Government should press Czechoslovak Government to release troops immediately after elections on May 29 so that Herr Henlein may be induced to negotiate.	383
322	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 337 Saving	May 26	Reports information from M.F.A. that conversation between M. Daladier and German Ambassador had been of a very friendly nature and that M.F.A. had also spoken to German Ambassador.	384
323	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 239 (Part I)	May 27	Reports conversation with Baron von Neurath regarding crisis: latter insisted on Herr Hitler's desire to avoid war.	384

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
324	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 239 (Part II)	May 27	Reports Baron von Neurath of opinion that Czechoslovak War Office was largely under influence of Moscow: Baron von Neurath stressed necessity for H.M.G. to continue to exercise strong pressure at Prague.	385
325	To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 207 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 126	May 27	Reports answer to parliamentary question suggesting despatch of an impartial commission to frontier between Germany and Czechoslovakia.	386
326	To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 208 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 127	May 27	Instructions to ascertain whether German and Czechoslovak Governments would welcome proposal that an international commission should be set up for investigation of any incidents which might lead to trouble.	386
327	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 204	May 27	Suggests that if moderates are in control in Germany and have any concern for reputation of German Government they should try to give proof of their desire for peaceful settlement by stopping the shufflings of the Sudeten German Party.	387
328	To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 209	May 27	Regrets there has been no modification in German press attacks against His Majesty's Government and suggests Herr von Ribbentrop might be assured that H.M.G. and French Government were doing all possible to bring pressure on Czechoslovak Government.	388
329	To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 130	May 27	Instructions to urge Czechoslovak Government to make a gesture regarding military measures which will render it easier for Herr Henlein to co-operate.	388
330	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 166	May 27	Instructions to convey substance of No. 329 to M. Bonnet and urge him to send similar instructions to French Minister in Prague.	389
331	To MR. VEREKER Moscow Tel. No. 67	May 27	Instructions to draw attention of M. Litvinov to importance of avoiding any action by Communists in Czechoslovakia which might give an excuse to German Government to try and settle matter by force and to suggest that any advice which M. Litvinov felt able to give in this sense would be valuable.	389
332	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 205	May 27	Reports result of French Minister's representations to President of Council regarding relaxation of military measures: Czech troops and aeroplanes to be withdrawn from vicinity of frontier.	390
333	MR. VEREKER Moscow Tel. No. 111	May 28	Refers to No. 331 and states his opinion that M. Litvinov would not receive suggestion favourably: will await further instructions.	391

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
334	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 244	May 28	Submits that definite withdrawal by Czechoslovak Government of all reserves from frontier districts into interior would be of greater importance than release of technical troops.	391
335	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 246	May 28	Reports reasons for German press attacks on England: states that campaign has momentarily ceased but may recommence in certain circumstances.	392
336	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 214	May 28	Refers to No. 304; considers that Mr. Newton has made out a good case in justification of military measures taken by Czechoslovak Government.	393
337	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 248	May 28	Reports State Secretary's views regarding proposed international commission.	393
338	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 218	May 28	Reports that he has urged on President of Council great importance of some definite and if possible visible result of meeting with Herr Henlein.	394
339	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 219	May 28	Reports information from President of Council that a substantial number of reservists would be released next week and also that troops would be withdrawn a certain distance from frontier.	395
340	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 220	May 28	Reports details of relaxation of military measures by Czechoslovak Government as given to Military Attaché by General Staff.	397
341	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 226	May 29	Reports that he took opportunity of visit to M.F.A. to mention briefly observations made to President of Council on the subject of disbandment.	397
342	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 232	May 30	Refers to No. 333 and points out that Dr. Krofta made no suggestion that Communists should be given a hint from Moscow: suggests error in transmission of telegram.	398
343	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 234	May 30	Reports evidence from visits paid to Sudeten German areas by Military Attaché and other members of Staff of Embassy that bitterness of population against military occupation is extreme.	398
344	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 221	May 30	Instructions to find an opportunity of impressing on Herr von Ribbentrop the dangers to which Anglo-German relations will be exposed if hostile press attacks continue.	399
345	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 141	May 30	Instructions to encourage Czechoslovak Government to persevere in their plans for demobilization and for withdrawal of troops from frontier districts now that elections appear to have passed off quietly: suggests Czechoslovak Government might like to make public announcement of measures taken.	400

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
346 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 140	May 30	Points out that although Czechs may have some reason to distrust good faith of German Government, latter also doubt good faith of President Benes: states one of chief reasons why H.M.G. are pressing Czechoslovak Government to modify military measures is hope that negotiations with Henlein party may proceed.	401
347 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 172	May 30	Instructions to discuss with M.F.A. idea of suggesting to Czechoslovak Government establishment of an international commission to investigate cause of deadlock should breakdown occur in negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Henlein party.	401
348 MR. VEREKER Moscow Telegram No. 31 Saving	May 30	Refers to No. 222 and reports explanation given by French Ambassador regarding words which he attributed to H.M. Ambassador in Berlin when they should have been stated as coming from Herr Woermann.	402
349 MR. STRANG	May 26-27	Notes on conversation with H.M. Minister and members of staff at H.M. Legation at Prague regarding proposal for plebiscite, appointment of an observer or a commission of inquiry and general questions.	403
350 MR. STRANG	May 28-29	Notes on conversation with H.M. Ambassador and members of staff at H.M. Embassy in Berlin regarding crisis of May 21-22 and further action on Sudeten question.	412

## CHAPTER V

### Further negotiations with a view to facilitating a settlement of the Sudeten question (May 31-July 14, 1938)

351 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 237	May 31	Reports information given to Air Attaché that majority of squadrons were now back at their normal peace-time aerodromes.	417
352 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 252	May 31	Reports that while German Government welcomed observers who would establish facts they were inclined to deprecate constitution of an <i>ad hoc</i> commission.	417
353 To MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 142	May 31	Instructions to make representations to President Benes to the effect that H.M.G. consider Czechoslovak Government should accept proposals put forward by Dr. Kundt in his interview with Dr. Hodza on May 30 as a basis of discussion.	418
354 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 175	May 31	Refers to No. 353 and hopes that French Government will take similar action. Suggests that they might also warn Dr. Benes that, if through any fault on his side, present opportunity to reach a settlement is missed, French Government would be forced to reconsider their position <i>vis-à-vis</i> Czechoslovakia.	419



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
355	MR. VEREKER Moscow No. 267	May 31	Transmits report by Military Attaché on conversations with his German and Czechoslovak colleagues respectively on the subject of the probable attitude of the Soviet Government towards an attack on Czechoslovakia.	419
356	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 247	June 1	Reports progress made in regard to 'disbandment' of troops called up.	424
357	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 169	June 1	Refers to No. 354 and reports that French Minister at Prague will be instructed accordingly. M. Bonnet is of opinion that representations to M. Benes should be made separately by French and British Ministers.	425
358	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 253	June 1	Reports observations of State Secretary on diplomatic action of H.M.G. in recent crisis.	426
359	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 254	June 1	Submits observations on course to be taken in event of breakdown of Czechoslovak Government and Henlein party negotiations.	426
360	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 255	June 1	Reports that he has informed State Secretary that Czechoslovak Government have begun to withdraw troops from the frontier and to demobilize technical reserves not required for maintenance of public order.	427
361	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 145	June 1	Suggests that it would be useful to inform Minister for Foreign Affairs of adverse reports received as to behaviour of troops in Sudeten area.	428
362	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 252	June 1	Reports his opinion that the most probable result of breakdown of negotiations, if it occurs, will be demand by Henlein party for plebiscite.	428
363	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 257	June 1	Reports that disbandment to be effected by June 10 will be increased in following weeks to a total of 104,000.	428
364	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 189	June 1	Reports (i) visit of two separate delegations from Czechoslovakia to welcome party of Slovaks from America; (ii) Press campaign against Czechs in connexion with the elections in Polish districts of Czechoslovakia.	429
365	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 183	June 1	Transmits memorandum from Military Attaché respecting a tour of the frontier districts to north and north-west of Prague.	432
366	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 184	June 1	Transmits copy of a despatch from H.M. Consul at Liberec regarding his visit to Karlsbad.	436
367	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 237	June 2	Instructions to convey privately and confidentially to German Government latest information regarding Czechoslovak relaxation of military measures.	438

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
368	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 259	June 2	Points out danger of pressing Czechoslovak Government too far and in particular to a point which Czech people might consider as compromising the integrity of the country.	439
369	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 239	June 3	Instructions to point out to State Secretary that only public announcement of action taken in Berlin at week-end May 20-22 was statement by Prime Minister in House of Commons on May 23.	440
370	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 152	June 3	Asks for clarification of figures regarding disbandment of Czechoslovak reserves called up.	441
371	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 264	June 3	Reports 49,000 men already released; further large number will be disbanded by June 20.	441
372	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 172 Saving	June 3	Points out that the incidents in the frontier areas occurred before troops called up and ceased as a result of that measure.	442
373	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 265	June 3	Reports representations made in accordance with instructions in No. 353: transmits M. Benes' observations regarding desire of Czechoslovak Government for speeding progress of negotiations and Henlein party's claim to self-administration.	442
374	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 153	June 4	Points out that article in 'The Times' of June 3 regarding wisdom of allowing Sudeten Germans to decide their own future in no way represents the views of H.M.G.	444
375	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 41	June 4	Reports views of French Ambassador after interview with Marshal Smigly-Rydz on June 3 on attitude likely to be adopted by Poland in event of Germany successfully invading Czechoslovakia.	444
376	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 267	June 4	Reports latest position regarding disbandment of reservists.	445
377	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 185 Saving	June 4	Reports statement by M. Benes in interview that almost everything could be given to Sudeten Germans which would not be incompatible with the unity of the State.	446
378	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 272 Saving	June 6	Sums up views of German Government and majority of German people on Sudeten German question and transmits observations thereon.	447
379	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 270	June 7	Reports latest information given to Military Attaché by General Staff regarding disbandment of reserves.	449
380	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	June 7	Letter to Mr. Strang enclosing a minute from Military Attaché giving his views on German military arrangements.	450

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
381	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 177	June 8	Reports that French Ambassador in Berlin intends in course of conversation with Herr Hitler to make personal suggestion that France, Great Britain, and Germany should discuss Czechoslovak problem together and that Ambassador appears also to have in mind a plan for neutralization of Czechoslovakia.	452
382	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 276	June 8	Reports progress of Sudeten negotiations.	452
383	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 249	June 8	Refers to No. 378 and points out that Herr Henlein's representatives were not insisting on whole Karlsbad programme.	453
384	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 157	June 8	Approves Mr. Newton's conversation with M. Benes and instructs him to ask for a further audience towards end of week in which he might express view that Czechoslovak Government cannot afford to close their minds entirely to possibility of agreeing to a national parliament.	453
385	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 916	June 8	Conversation of Secretary of State with German Ambassador in which exchange of views took place regarding general Anglo-German relations.	454
386	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 917	June 8	Conversation of Secretary of State with German Ambassador regarding Czechoslovak problem, German press attacks on Great Britain, and general attitude of H.M.G.	455
387	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 250	June 9	Instructions to discourage French Ambassador from suggesting to Herr Hitler that Czechoslovak problem should be settled by means of direct negotiation between France, Great Britain, and Germany.	458
388	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 263	June 9	Suggests Czechoslovak Government would be well advised to announce publicly that they would agree to negotiate on basis of Karlsbad programme.	458
389	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 282	June 9	Reports details of French Minister's interview with President Benes and President of the Council.	459
390	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 369 Saving	June 9	Reports information from M. de Brinon that M.F.A. has asked Czechoslovak Minister to return to Prague in order to get details of President Benes' intentions with regard to Herr Henlein.	460
391	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 264	June 10	Reports conversation with French Ambassador on proposal for settlement of Sudeten question by International Commission.	460
392	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 284	June 10	Reports official communiqué to effect that representatives of Sudeten German party have laid before President of Council proposals for solution of nationality problems in the State.	461

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
393	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 286	June 10	Reports that Chief of General Staff has asked Military Attaché to convey a personal request to British General Staff to exercise their influence with Foreign Office not to put pressure on Czechoslovak Government to reduce numbers of men now serving: discusses Czechoslovak view of military situation.	462
394	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 287	June 10	Reports observations by Secretary of German Legation regarding danger of incidents following withdrawal of troops.	463
395	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 50 Saving	June 10	Reports details of a conversation between Czechoslovak Minister and M.F.A. regarding troops on frontier and Polish-Czechoslovak relations generally.	464
396	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 288	June 11	Reports conversation with President of Council regarding progress of negotiations with Henlein party. Dr. Hodza stated he hoped it would be possible to announce certain specific concessions by middle of next week.	466
397	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 167	June 11	Instructions to warn Czechoslovak Government of possible serious effects if decision to call up reservists to do their training now instead of in September carried out.	467
398	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 194	June 11	Draws attention to fact that French Minister at Prague does not appear to have been given the instructions promised by M. Bonnet.	468
399	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 289	June 11	Reports interview with President Benes regarding progress of negotiations: memorandum of claims of Sudeten party now received by Czechoslovak Government.	469
400	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 290	June 12	Refers to No. 393 and reports that Military Attaché considers main contentions of Chief of General Staff to be reasonable.	471
401	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 207 Saving	June 12	Reports his statement to President Benes that leading article in 'The Times' of June 3 did not represent views of H.M.G.	472
402	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 293	June 13	Reports protest made by President Benes against stories circulating in London and Paris that Czechoslovak Government were deliberately prolonging or postponing a settlement of Sudeten question.	472
403	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 294	June 13	Refers to No. 397 and states reasons why he thinks it would be a mistake to make representations to Czechoslovak Government regarding calling up reservists for training.	473
404	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 274 (Part I)	June 13	Transmits views on reported decision of Czechoslovak Government to call up reservists now instead of in September and to extend military service from two to three years.	474

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
405	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. Unnumbered	June 13	Continuation of No. 404.	475
406	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 181	June 13	Refers to No. 398 and reports information from M.F.A. that he had decided to make representations to President Benes through Czechoslovak Minister in Paris instead of French Minister in Prague and that he had received a favourable report of the effect of his mission from M. Osusky.	476
407	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1254	June 13	Conversation of Secretary of State with French Ambassador regarding Czechoslovakia.	477
408	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 385 Saving	June 14	Reports M. Caillaux's opinion that France would never go to war for Czechoslovakia: on the other hand M.F.A. repeated that in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia, France would stand by the latter.	477
409	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 386 Saving	June 14	Reports views of the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chamber regarding Czechoslovakia.	478
410	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 205	June 14	Transmits observations on Polish attitude towards Czechoslovakia and expresses opinion that if German army were to cross the Czechoslovak frontier Poles would occupy Teschen area: encloses extracts from record of a conversation of General Stachiewicz with Military Attaché.	478
411	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 206	June 14	Transmits further extracts of conversation reported in No. 410: possibility of Russian intervention.	481
412	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 257	June 15	States views of H.M.G. regarding latest military measures of Czechoslovak Government: considers that these measures appear to be justified.	484
413	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 275	June 15	Reports opinion that if 3 years' military service law is adopted by Czechoslovak Government, prospects of settlement of Sudeten German question will be wrecked.	485
414	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 203	June 15	Transmits report by H.M. Consul at Liberec on his visit to Sudeten German areas of North Moravia and Silesia.	487
415	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 206	June 15	Transmits observations on two memoranda presented to Czechoslovak Government by Sudeten German party as embodying their proposals.	490
416	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 169	June 16	Approves language held to President of Council and President Benes: instructions to take every opportunity of urging Czechoslovak Government to announce their agreement to those portions of the Sudeten demands which they have made up their minds to accept.	491

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
417	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 300	June 16	Refers to No. 413 and transmits views regarding the introduction of the 3 years' military service law.	492
418	TO MR. NEWTON Prague No. 312	June 16	Conversation of Secretary of State with Czechoslovak Minister on latter's return from visit to Prague: Minister fairly optimistic regarding result of negotiations, but stated that Germans were doing their utmost by wireless and press to prejudice them.	493
419	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	June 16	Letter to Secretary of State stating opinion that a peaceful solution might be reached this year: regrets proposed introduction of 3 years' military service law by Czechoslovak Government.	494
420	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 202	June 17	Stresses need for closest co-operation between H.M.G. and French Government and hopes actual text of memorandum handed to President Benes by M. Osusky and reply will be made available.	495
421	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 147 Saving	June 17	Instructions to discuss with M.F.A. possibility of inviting Czechoslovakia to remodel her treaty relations with France, U.S.S.R., and Germany.	496
422	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 172	June 17	Fears latent agitation for a plebiscite will be brought to the surface if no adequate Czechoslovak offer is now forthcoming as a basis for agreement: important that Dr. Hodza should realize this.	498
423	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 171	June 17	Asks whether report is correct that Czechoslovak Parliament is not to meet until July.	498
424	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1298	June 17	Conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan during which M. Corbin gave account of all his Government had done in Prague to bring pressure to bear on Czechoslovak Government to show conciliation in present negotiations: French Government would hesitate to keep up present very strong pressure on President Benes unless fresh circumstances arose which would warrant it.	498
425	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 174	June 18	States that H.M.G. is considering possibility of sounding Czechoslovak Government as to whether, in the event of a breakdown of negotiations, they would be ready to accept the services of an independent British expert who would try and reconcile the two parties: asks for Mr. Newton's views on this proposal.	501
426	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 226 Saving	June 18	Reports progress of Sudeten negotiations: President of Council stated he realized that no time must be lost and that he would do his utmost to reach agreement; he intended in any case to introduce Government's concessions and reforms when Parliament met about July 12.	501



	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
427	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 230 Saving	June 18	Nationalities Statute: reports present method appears to be to work on Sudeten programme and adapt the Statute so as to give maximum effect to the Sudeten requirements.	502
428	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 397 Saving	June 18	Reports that M.F.A. has promised to communicate text of memorandum taken by M. Osusky to Prague and of reply: M. Bonnet will ensure that pressure is put upon Chief of French Military Mission to urge moderation in Czechoslovak military circles.	503
429	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 399 Saving	June 18	Reports oral communication made to M.F.A. as instructed regarding the possible remodelling of Czechoslovak treaty relations with France, U.S.S.R., and Germany: M. Bonnet will study question and reply in due course.	503
430	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 278	June 19	Reports visit of Czechoslovak Minister on his return from Prague.	503
431	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 304	June 21	States his views regarding proposal to offer British mediator to Czechoslovak Government in event of breakdown of negotiations.	504
432	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 176	June 22	Has learned on good authority that Sudeten leaders are dissatisfied with course of negotiations and in particular with attitude of President and Czechoslovak press: instructions to see Dr. Benes and impress on him the necessity of educating the press and public to the need for unpleasant concessions.	506
433	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 178	June 22	States it is reported that Sudeten leaders are considering publication of proposals of both sides if no serious offer which might be a basis of a solution is made by Czechoslovak Government in next two or three days.	508
434	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 307	June 22	Reports conversation with M.F.A. on progress of Sudeten negotiations and especially on attitude of Czechoslovak press.	508
435	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 308	June 23	Considers that President Benes does not resent pressure applied by H.M.G. nor their advice: proposes to apply for an audience next week and asks whether Secretary of State has any message to send.	510
436	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 310	June 23	Transmits summary of comments of Czechoslovak Government on 13 Sudeten demands: considers it improbable that agreement will be reached on the questions of greatest importance as both sides approach questions from fundamentally opposed points of view.	510

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
437	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 283	June 23	Reports that German press has for last ten days shown comparative moderation over Czechoslovakia, but certain specific signs of restiveness noticeable over absence of definite reports of progress from Prague.	511
438	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 53 Saving	June 23	Reports M.F.A.'s opinion that it was dangerous for Czechoslovak Government to continue indefinitely their temporizing tactics. According to German Ambassador Polish Government entertained hope either of bringing Slovakia into some kind of federalization with Poland or of obtaining a common frontier with Hungary in the event of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia.	512
439	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 644	June 23	Reports observations of Field-Marshal Göring regarding the necessity for an understanding with Britain and the problem of Czechoslovakia.	513
440	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 311	June 24	Points out possibility of Czechoslovak Government asking H.M.G. what they consider a reasonable settlement in present dispute and transmits observations thereon.	514
441	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 312	June 24	Considers that he should see President of Council before audience with President Benes: proposes to tell Dr. Benes that H.M.G. will expect to be consulted before outstanding difficulties are allowed to lead to a rupture.	516
442	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 181	June 24	States that he may give to President Benes instructions contained in No. 432 as a message from Secretary of State to him.	516
443	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 314	June 25	Reports conversation with Herr Frank regarding progress of negotiations.	517
444	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 316 • • •	June 27	Reports conversation on June 26 with President of Council in which latter asked for all help which could be given to him in immediate future: Dr. Hodza hoped that everything possible would be done to influence Sudeten party to be reasonable in their demands.	519
445	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 288	June 27	Stresses necessity for President Benes to agree to some form of comprehensive settlement and not to a mere paper scheme based on concessions of detail.	520
446	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 319	June 27	Refers to No. 444 and reports further details of conversation with President of Council: Dr. Hodza seemed confident that if he could not solve the main problem he could put through important matters which the Government were already prepared to concede.	521
447	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 747	June 27	Transmits text of memorandum referred to in No. 428.	522

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
448 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 323	June 28	Reports that French Minister, who had interview with President of Council on June 27, gained the impression that latter was determined to push negotiations through to some result by the end of this week.	524
449 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 324	June 28	Reports interview with President in which Dr. Benes stated that he was prepared to go a very long way to meet Sudeten party's demands but could not accept all of them. Suggests time has come to apply pressure also on Sudeten party and in Berlin if there is to be hope of a reasonable compromise consistent with effective unity of State.	525
450 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 198	June 28	Reports that he has urged on M.F.A. necessity of French Government supporting H.M.G. both by pressure on President Benes by French Minister in Prague and pressure in Paris on Czechoslovak Minister.	526
451 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 289	June 29	Reports that he has been applying persistent and continuous pressure on various members of German Government urging moderation, patience, &c., but cannot do more until he knows what solution Czechoslovak Government propose.	527
452 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 158 Saving	June 29	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that H.M.G. is considering possibility of appointing a British mediator if present Czechoslovak-Sudeten negotiations break down.	527
453 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 271	June 29	Expresses hope that German Government will show patience and restraint when Czechoslovak Government make known in Parliament such concessions as they are now ready to make.	528
454 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 186	June 29	Approves language held to President of Council and Herr Frank: states that steps are being taken to influence Sudeten party and to ensure that party of British visitors who may visit Prague use language which will be helpful.	529
455 MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 258 Saving	June 29	Transmits further details of conversation with President Benes at interview on June 28: memorandum of Government measures will be ready in about a week and will then be presented to representatives of all nationalities.	529
456 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1427	June 29	Has informed French Ambassador of views of H.M.G. as regards the selection of a mediator in the event of a deadlock in negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten German party.	531
457 TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 188	June 30	Instructions to discover intentions of Czechoslovak Government as regards legislation when Parliament meets.	532

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
458	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 303 Saving	June 30	Transmits views regarding present stage of negotiations and reports his opinion of the strength of the Sudeten claim to self-determination.	533
459	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 290	July 1	Reports views of French Ambassador regarding Czechoslovak crisis.	534
460	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 291	July 1	Reports that he has arranged to see M.F.A. on 4th instant and asks whether there is anything to say to him beyond general line already indicated.	536
461	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 439 Saving	July 1	Reports agreement by M. Bonnet that every effort should be continued to bring present negotiations to a successful conclusion and that intention to have a British mediator in reserve should not be known to Czechs or Germans.	536
462	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 440 Saving	July 1	Reports promise by M. Bonnet to give his views on proposals for remodelling Czechoslovakia's treaty relations at an early date.	536
463	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 278	July 2	Instructions to urge upon Herr von Ribbentrop the great importance (i) of restraint and patience when Czechoslovak Government's offers and decisions are announced, (ii) of moderation in German press and wireless.	537
464	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 294	July 2	Reports observations of State Secretary regarding progress of negotiations in Prague: latter complained of delays.	537
465	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 333	July 2	Points out that Czechoslovak Government appear to have made a considerable advance from their original position and suggests that it is time that Sudeten German party made some concessions.	538
466	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 446 Saving	July 2	Refers to No. 462 and reports that M.F.A. repeated his promise to reply to Secretary of State's proposals at an early date.	539
467	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 335	July 3	Discusses position of Czechoslovak Government in respect of giving legislative effect to reforms now agreed upon: considers that if Czechoslovak Government agree to postponement of any substantial part of their Nationalities Statute they should make it clear they are doing so to meet the desire of the Sudeten German party.	539
468	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 337	July 4	Considers that fact that H.M.G. would not be committed to support the views of the British mediator would make proposal less attractive to Czechoslovak Government.	541
469	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 295	July 4	Reports carrying out of instructions in No. 463; transmits observations of Herr von Ribbentrop regarding attitude of German press and progress of negotiations.	542

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
470	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 338	July 4	Reports remarks made by German Minister in Prague regarding progress of negotiations: latter stated that no settlement reached at present would be final but that one embodying the main substance of Sudeten claims would mark a definite stage and represent solution for time being.	543
471	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 280 Saving	July 4	Points out inconsistency of German Government statements about Sudeten Germans.	544
472	Secretary of State	July 7	Memorandum handed to French Ambassador by Lord Halifax containing observations on French memorandum in No. 447.	545
473	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 340	July 9	Reports information from Czechoslovak Minister in London on July 8 that Parliamentary Committee concerned hoped to have completed its examination of Government nationality proposals by July 12.	546
474	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 341	July 9	Transmits account of present state of Nationalities question received from official specially concerned on staff of the President: Parliament likely to meet about July 21, but meeting might have to be further postponed.	547
475	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 292 Saving	July 9	Reports that French Minister had interview with President Benes and President of Council on July 1 in course of which he drew their attention to unsatisfactory utterances not only of press but also of certain Government officials.	548
476	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 294 Saving	July 10	Reports conversation with M. Monnet, who brought up question of neutralizing Czechoslovakia.	549
477	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 300 Saving	July 12	Reports that M. Monnet discussed question of neutralizing Czechoslovakia with President Benes and President of Council. Dr. Benes said that it would be examined if seriously raised by France and Great Britain, but Dr. Hodza summarily rejected idea.	550
478	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 301 Saving	July 12	Reports M.F.A.'s views of likely policy of Polish Government towards Czechoslovakia.	550
479	TO MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 1537	July 12	Transmits record of a conversation between Sir A. Cadogan and French Ambassador on July 9 during which M. Corbin said French Government would like to discuss with H.M.G. possibility of working out some proposal in event of breakdown of Czechoslovak-Sudeten negotiations.	551
480	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 342	July 13	Reports President of Council uneasy over intentions of Germany in near future.	553

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
481	MR. CAMPBELL Paris Tel. No. 467 Saving	July 13	Reports reasons given, on behalf of President of Council, by Secretary General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs for M. Daladier's reaffirmation of French Government's position in speech on July 12.	554
482	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 248	July 13	Transmits memorandum by Observers attached to H.M. Legation regarding a conversation with Herr Frank respecting Sudeten German question.	555
483	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 343	July 14	Reports interview with President of Council on July 13 at which progress of negotiations was discussed.	557
484	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 344	July 14	Reports likelihood of crisis in Cabinet owing to President of Council's failure to obtain approval for his programme of administrative reform at meeting of July 12.	558
485	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 345	July 14	Reports information from French Minister that according to Herr Kundt there was again a movement of Czechoslovak troops towards the frontier. Movement of troops denied by President of Council.	559
486	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 346	July 14	Reports views of German Minister regarding Nationalities question.	559
487	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 330 Saving	July 14	Reports no indication of any unusual military measures, but German Army instructed to hold itself in readiness for all eventualities.	561
488	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 191	July 14	Reports information that Herr Henlein took pessimistic view of situation on or about July 8 and asks for views regarding Herr Henlein's allegations.	562
489	TO MR. CAMPBELL Paris No. 1571	July 14	Reports conversation of Secretary of State with French Ambassador regarding German intentions in the near future and progress of Czechoslovak-Sudeten negotiations.	563

## CHAPTER VI

Proposal by His Majesty's Government to send Viscount Runciman on a special mission to Prague: acceptance of proposal by the Czechoslovak Government (July 15-23, 1938)

490	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 348	July 15	Asks for authority to inform President of Council that if it appeared that Czechoslovak Government were to blame for failing to reach settlement and Herr Henlein asked for a plebiscite, British public opinion would almost certainly feel such a proposal to be not unreasonable.	566
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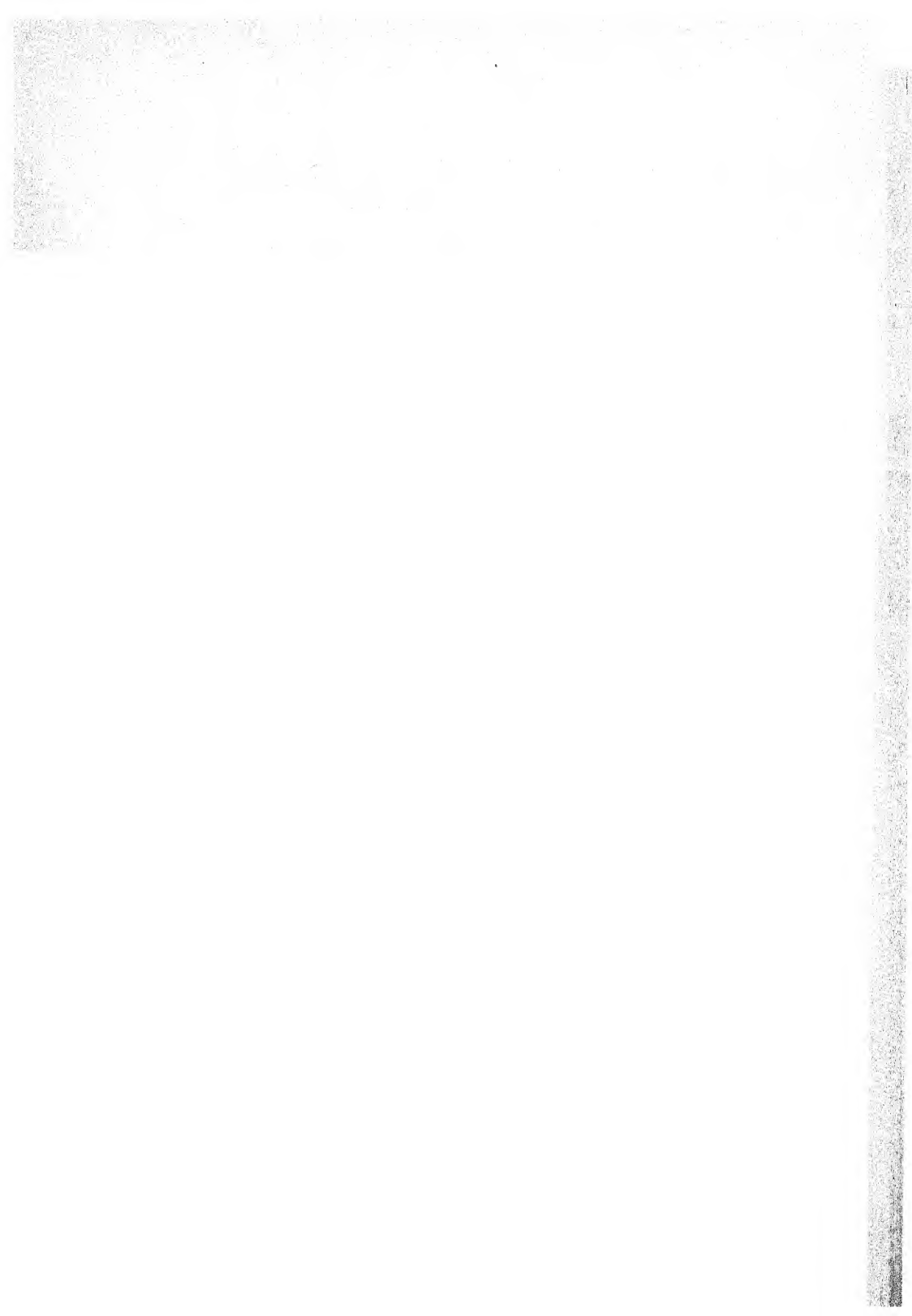


	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
491	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 349	July 15	Reports release of a number of reservists on July 16; next batch not due for calling up until July 25: General Staff uneasy about possible trouble in Sudeten areas during this period.	566
492	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 350	July 15	Reports rumours in press that Sudeten German party is organizing a strike.	567
493	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 194	July 16	States Lord Runciman has agreed to undertake office of independent mediator in case of need.	567
494	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 306	July 16	Reports conversation with State Secretary who was discouraged over state of negotiations in Prague.	568
495	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 352	July 16	Reports fully audience with President Benes regarding development of situation.	569
496	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 353	July 16	Refers to No. 488 and transmits observations asked for on Herr Henlein's allegations.	573
497	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 354	July 16	Reports opinion that time has now come for offer of British mediator to be made to the Czechoslovak Government.	574
498	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 355	July 16	Reports denial by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of statement by Deutsche Nachrichten Büro that a renewed Czechoslovak mobilization was taking place.	575
499	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 356	July 16	Refers to No. 498 and states that he is sending Observer to report.	576
500	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 357	July 16	Refers to statement by President Benes in audience of July 16 that Language Law would grant equality in principle while maintaining certain limitations unavoidable in practice.	576
501	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 358	July 16	Raises question whether Czechoslovak Government should be warned that German army has been told to hold itself in readiness for all eventualities.	576
502	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 473 Saving	July 16	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Czechoslovak situation.	577
503	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 175 Saving	July 17	Instructions to convey to President of Council warm appreciation of message sent in regard to his recent speech: Secretary of State hopes to see him and M. Bonnet next week.	578
504	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 362	July 17	Reports further points made during course of audience with President Benes.	578
505	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 367	July 17	Reports statement by President Benes that there is no truth in story that Nationalities Statute was about to be published irrespective of the negotiations with the Sudeten German party.	579

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
506	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 368	July 18	Refers to No. 499 and transmits message from Observers to effect that there is no evidence of troops other than normal garrisons in areas visited.	579
507	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 310	July 18	Reports that German aviators are being recalled from Spain and that members of Field-Marshal Göring's entourage have told Press correspondents that serious developments are possible at end of August.	580
508	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 25 Saving	July 18	Instructions to raise question of mediator with President Benes: mediator proposed is Lord Runciman.	581
509	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 341 Saving	July 18	Transmits summary of measure described as a 'Law regarding services for military purposes'.	584
510	Record of conversation	July 18	Record of conversation between Viscount Halifax and Captain Wiedemann.	584
511	SIR A. CADOGAN	July 18	Letter to Captain Wiedemann sending text of message read to him by Secretary of State regarding possible Anglo-German conversations.	589
512	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 18	Letter to Secretary of State urging that Czechoslovak Government be pressed to come to terms with Sudeten German party.	590
513	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 18	Letter to Secretary of State giving correct account of interview with Herr von Ribbentrop referred to in paragraph 5 of Mr. Newton's telegram of July 14 (No. 486).	591
514	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 18	Letter to Sir O. Sargent pointing out that he has no more confidence than Foreign Office in statements made by M.F.A. and State Secretary. Thinks Sudeten German youth capable of violent action without encouragement from Germany.	592
515	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 257 E	July 19	Transmits report on economic situation which has deteriorated owing to political tension between Czechs and Germans.	593
516	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 197	July 19	Explains, in reply to inquiry, that should President Benes reject offer of mediator, H.M.G. may be compelled later to publish offer and response to it.	595
517	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 315	July 20	Reports interview with State Secretary at latter's request to discuss detailed report which he had received in regard to negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten party: State Secretary said that Czechoslovak Government had no intention of abandoning National State in favour of State of Nationalities.	596

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
518	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 314	July 20	Reports that Italian Ambassador agrees with his view that German Government would accept an agreed settlement containing substantial concessions to Sudeten Germans: suggests that H.M.G. should insist that a comprehensive scheme must be based on a form of federalism.	597
519	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 317	July 20	Refers to No. 501 and deprecates giving any warning to Czechoslovak Government that German military forces were prepared for all eventualities.	598
520	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 290	July 20	Describes visit of German Ambassador to Sir A. Cadogan on July 19 during which former gave a résumé of Sudeten party's complaints against the Czechoslovak Government.	598
521	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 380	July 20	Reports audience with President Benes during which Mr. Newton conveyed to him suggestion of appointment of mediator.	600
522	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 381	July 20	Refers to No. 521 and transmits amendments to text of paragraph 8 of No. 508 made in written extract which he left with President.	601
523	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 480 Saving	July 20	Message from Secretary of State describing his conversation with M. Bonnet and M. Daladier regarding Czechoslovak crisis.	601
524	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 20	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan explaining his anxiety about the position.	603
525	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 382	July 21	Transmits further account of audience with President Benes.	604
526	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 383	July 21	Reports conversation regarding mediator with President of Council who stated that he would welcome Lord Runciman and would try to obtain the agreement of his colleagues in the Cabinet.	607
527	TO MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 199	July 21	Asks whether assurance that there is no longer any danger of Nationalities Statute being presented to Parliament as an indivisible whole can be given to Herr Henlein.	608
528	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 390	July 21	Reports that President of Council seems to be uncertain how to proceed with communication of Government proposals to Sudeten German representatives.	608
529	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 344 Saving	July 21	Transmits text of reply received from State Secretary to letter informing him that according to British Observers there was no evidence of Czechoslovak troop movements on frontier.	609
530	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 21	Letter from Mr. Strang transmitting information regarding German military preparations and requesting observations thereon.	610

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
531	MR. NEWTON Prague No. 258	July 21	Transmits copy of memorandum handed to President Benes in course of audience on July 20.	612
532	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 319	July 22	Expresses view that without radical modification of Nationalities Statute efforts of independent mediator will be sterile: suggests Italian Government might be asked to join H.M.G. in proposing a Conference of Four Powers to deal with problem.	613
533	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 391	July 22	Refers to No. 527 and transmits observations on question of assurance raised therein regarding presentation to Parliament of Nationalities Statute.	615
534	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	July 22	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan suggesting that if President Benes refuses to make fundamental changes in Government proposals, question of plebiscite should be considered.	616
535	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 295	July 22	Transmits record of conversation of Prime Minister with German Ambassador on July 22 regarding Czechoslovak crisis and Anglo-German relations.	618
536	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 393	July 23	Reports that he has received from President of Council reply of Czechoslovak Government regarding mediator.	620
537	MR. NEWTON Prague Tel. No. 394	July 23	Transmits translation of reply from Czechoslovak Government accepting proposal to send mediator.	620
APPENDIX I				621
	Additional exchange of letters between Lord Halifax and Sir N. Henderson. March 20-July 18, 1938.			
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	Record of Herr Henlein's statements to Mr. Churchill, Sir A. Sinclair, and Sir R. Vansittart while on a visit to London in May, 1938.			
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## CHAPTER I

# Attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the German annexation of Austria: German assurances to the Czechoslovak Government (March 9-16, 1938)

### No. 1

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 9, 4.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 54 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2271/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 9, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>1</sup> has just told me that the Chancellor has decided to appeal to the country and will announce his decision at Innsbruck at 7 o'clock this evening. All Austrians of either sex over twenty-four will be asked if they wish 'for a free, German, independent, Socialist,<sup>2</sup> Christian, and undivided (einiges) Austria, for peace and work and equal rights for all who confess their allegiance to people and fatherland'. Voting will take place next Sunday but result will not be known before Monday. Governors of all provinces except Styria have declared their conviction of large majority.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Guido Schmidt.

<sup>2</sup> The term used by Dr. von Schuschnigg was 'soziales'.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Palairet was instructed on March 9 to repeat future telegrams on the subject of the plebiscite directly to H.M. Missions at Berlin, Paris, Prague and Rome.

### No. 2

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 9, 5.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 55 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2272/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 9, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

The Chancellor wishes it to be realized that this step is not directed against Germany. He feels however obliged to ascertain where he stands and whether Berchtesgaden agreement<sup>2</sup> is to be kept or not. It is being treated by the Minister of the Interior<sup>3</sup> as a means to further developments and the latter's actions and words have already gone far beyond its terms. He is objecting to

<sup>1</sup> No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For correspondence dealing with this agreement, see the preceding volume in this Collection. An account of the agreement and of events leading to the German action against Austria is contained below in No. 132.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Seyss-Inquart was appointed Minister of the Interior and Director of Public Security under the Berchtesgaden agreement.



plebiscite and if he is backed up by Herr Hitler the situation may at any moment become dangerous. The Minister for Foreign Affairs said the matter was not the concern of Herr Hitler but I said that was not the German view. He relies on Italian goodwill especially since the opening of Anglo-Italian conversations.

He told me that Chancellor had originally contemplated announcing the plebiscite in his speech of February 24 but had given up the idea as it would have seemed due to German pressure. The decision was only taken a few days ago as the Chancellor told the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>4</sup> only last week that the plebiscite would be too dangerous. He has now been persuaded by the President<sup>5</sup> and Zernatto,<sup>6</sup> and himself feels that he has more chance of large majority now than if the present situation of uncertainty and economic standstill and Nazi propaganda is allowed to continue and to culminate in 'German Day' announced for March 27.

My own view is that risk is worth taking. Chancellor would lose his authority if the present atmosphere of alarm and uncertainty were to continue. If he gains large majority he intends to put down all illegal activities with a firm hand.

I hope British press will emphasize that plebiscite is free and spontaneous choice of the Chancellor who is confident of the result.

<sup>4</sup> M. Kánya.

<sup>5</sup> Herr Miklas.

<sup>6</sup> Minister without Portfolio and Secretary-General of the Fatherland Front.

### No. 3

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 9, 9.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 58 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2273/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 9, 1938

Chancellor's speech at Innsbruck has just been broadcast. Principal points apart from announcement of plebiscite were: appeal to Austrians to devote themselves to work instead of to politics and to distinguish between what was legal and what was illegal: his determination to hold fast to principles laid down by Dollfuss: Austrian independence being based not on treaties but on the will of the people of Austria, he must know what their will was: the plebiscite was not forced on them, it was a free one and required no propaganda. Unity, not parties, was needed: appeal to workers to co-operate: definite promise to suppress illegalities not covered by Berchtesgaden agreement: if workers kept to agreement, so must National Socialists. He concluded by warm praise of Tyrolese regiments.

Speech seems to have been received with great enthusiasm. Chancellor said he recognised grave responsibility he had taken in deciding on plebiscite but appealed confidently to support of all patriotic Austrians.

No. 4

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received March 10, 12.0 noon)

*No. 82 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2286/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 10, 1938

The press has not been allowed to publish any report of Dr. Schuschnigg's speech or even the fact that there is to be a plebiscite in Austria on March 13.

Both in wording of the question and in manner in which plebiscite is to be carried out, Dr. Schuschnigg seems to have taken a leaf out of the Nazi book. His tactics are likely to arouse much storm here and the German press may be expected to trot out all the arguments used in the British and French press during the last few years to prove that German plebiscites do not constitute a fair test of public opinion.

I understand that feverish work is going on in order to determine the exact line to be taken by the German press. In consequence publication of news will be delayed until tonight or even tomorrow.

Repeated to Vienna.

No. 5

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received March 10, 5.20 p.m.)

*No. 83 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2319/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 10, 1938

My telegram No. 82.<sup>1</sup>

The evening papers announce the forthcoming plebiscite in Austria in the form of a 'Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau' message from Innsbruck. Headlines are hostile and the message gives the conditions under which the plebiscite will be held but no account of Dr. Schuschnigg's speech. Comment is in all cases very short and is plainly paraphrased from one common source.

The 'Börsen Zeitung' for example says: 'This announcement from the mouth of the Austrian Chancellor is surprising in many ways and must lead inevitably to the conclusion—if one reads the voting regulations—that so sudden a fixing of the vote and the in some cases incredible regulations, e.g. the rules for ayes and noes, can scarcely render possible a real and truthful elucidation of the people's will. There can be no question of a free vote. The absence of electoral rolls and control opens wide the door to party machinations and influence of a certain kind. It is questionable what the results of this scarcely comprehensible announcement will be.'

The comment of the other newspapers is almost the same in length, tone and use of words.

Repeated to Vienna.

<sup>1</sup> No. 4.

## No. 6

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10, 6.50 p.m.)*  
*No 60 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2317/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 10, 1938

My telegram No. 59.<sup>1</sup>

I now hear from private source that Austrian Nazis have decided to take no part in plebiscite on ground that conditions under which it is being held preclude free expression of the people's will. They refuse to give affirmative vote as it would be taken as vote of confidence in Dr. Schuschnigg.

<sup>1</sup> Telegrams 59 and 60 were despatched in reverse order.

## No. 7

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 10, 9.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 59 Telegraphic [R 2316/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 10, 1938, 7.50 p.m.

Nazis seem to be far from pleased with announcement of plebiscite and German Military Attaché used strong language in discussing it with Air Attaché. I gather that it is not yet certain whether they will vote in the affirmative or abstain from voting: but that there is no question of their voting in the negative.

Well-informed observers consider Dr. Schuschnigg will obtain large majority and Political Director looks forward to result with confidence. If Nazi[s] vote for terms of plebiscite the figures should be impressive and Dr. Schuschnigg's hands should be correspondingly strengthened. If they abstain, Government believe figures will be still satisfactory and that they will be able to estimate the strength of the Nazis.

Percentage of voters will be very difficult to ascertain accurately since there are no readily available statistics of those (over 24 years of age) eligible to vote.

The chief danger apprehended by the authorities is that the Nazis, who are active and organized, may create disturbances on Sunday and try to intimidate voters or prevent them from entering polling booths.

## No. 8

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 70 Telegraphic [C 1664/42/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 10, 1938, 11.30 p.m.

In the course of my conversation with the German Ambassador today<sup>1</sup> (a record of which you will receive shortly) covering the whole ground of your recent interview with the Chancellor, I took the opportunity to say that I wished to speak to His Excellency very frankly on general lines. His Majesty's Government sincerely desired peace and good relations between all the

<sup>1</sup> Herr von Ribbentrop, who had been appointed Foreign Minister on February 4, was in London on a short visit.

nations. Good relations between Great Britain and Germany would be an immense contribution to this end. It was for that reason that His Majesty's Government had been prepared to run great risks and make sacrifices. I had not concealed from him our disappointment at the Chancellor's response, though this made no difference to our firmly rooted desire for better understanding and we should at all times be ready to join the Chancellor in the attempt to realise this end.

But, if we were to succeed, we could not do it alone and all must help. We had from the beginning made it plain that the colonial issue would never be treated by this country in isolation. I would repeat that we had no desire to place obstacles in the way of peaceful agreement reached by peaceful means. We recognised the reality of the problems from the German point of view, connected with Austria and Czechoslovakia. We had not tried to block Austria but had rather tried to steady European opinion, shaken by the Berchtesgaden interview. We had, moreover, consistently used our influence, and were ready to go on doing so, at Prague to promote a peaceful settlement there. But we should be less than frank if we did not make it clear to the German Government the danger we saw in the expression that responsible leaders in Germany were giving in public to German policy and to the spirit in which that policy was being pursued. The suggestion was being created that something more than fair treatment of minorities was involved. This seemed to us to put back the chance of reaching peaceful settlement: and to hold very dangerous possibilities for Europe. The last thing we wanted to see was a war in Europe. But the experience of all history went to show that the pressure of facts was sometimes more powerful than the wills of men: and if once war should start in Central Europe, it was quite impossible to say where it might not end, or who might not become involved. This then was the danger of the situation as we saw it, laying a very heavy responsibility upon us all, and not least upon the German Government. The course of events and the language used in Germany of late, both in public and in private, could not fail both to make peaceful solutions more difficult and to excite apprehensions lest all this might one day lead to some act, which in its turn might, contrary to the intention of the German Government, precipitate a general conflict.

Repeated to Paris, Prague, Vienna and Rome.

#### No. 9

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 71 Telegraphic [R 2340/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 10, 1938, 11.30 p.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of this interview the German Ambassador gave voice to a short sharp condemnation of the proposed plebiscite in Austria. This he

<sup>1</sup> No. 8.

stigmatised as a fraud and a swindle, and quoted several items of the proposed procedure to justify such sweeping condemnation. The question was badly phrased; there would be no check on the vote; the whole affair was being jerrymand[er]ed by a Government that represented only a small minority and that had established itself in power by unlawful means against the interests of 80 per cent. of the Austrian population.

In reply I impressed upon Herr von Ribbentrop that I attached the utmost importance to everything being done to ensure that the plebiscite was carried out without interference or intimidation; we assumed the German Government would share our views and would, therefore, take all measures in their power to restrain Nazi followers from any action which might interfere with the smooth and free holding of the plebiscite. It really was of the first importance in our view that every care should be taken to avoid anything that might lead to or encourage violent action, for, if any explosion should occur at any time, it was quite impossible for any man to tell what might be the limit or the end.

Herr von Ribbentrop said he did not know what action his Government might be taking about the plebiscite. If I would allow him to say so, he thought that the most useful contribution we could make would be to use our influence with the Austrian Chancellor to cancel the plebiscite.

I answered that, whatever might be his view or mine about the plebiscite, it seemed a tall order to say that the Head of a State could not have a plebiscite if he wanted to. I did not happen to believe in plebiscites much, but that was merely a matter of opinion and, as long as any conventions of ordinary behaviour between independent nations prevailed, I thought it scarcely possible to deny the right to the Head of a State to resort to a plebiscite if he so desired. His Excellency responded by saying that this really was an attempt by a minority Government, representing 20 per cent. to force an unwelcome solution on the majority of 80 per cent. I finally said that, if the facts were really as he stated, it was quite evident that the pressure of events would bring their own solution and that only harm could result from any action by the German Government to try to impose short cuts in a situation that was highly charged with ugly possibilities.

Repeated to Vienna, Prague, Paris and Rome.

## No. 10

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 6.10 a.m.)*  
*Unnumbered: telegraphic: by telephone [R 2320/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

Political Director has just telephoned to me to say that Austrian Government learn that German-Austrian frontier has been closed, no trains have been allowed to pass Salzburg since early this morning, and there are reports of troop movements and closing of roads on German side.



## No. 11

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 9.15 a.m.)*  
*No. 61 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2326/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My telegram unnumbered of this morning.<sup>1</sup>

Only Salzburg and Upper Austrian frontier[s] are now closed; Tyrol-Vorarlberg have been reopened. Herr von Papen left for Berlin this morning after warning Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs not to attach too great importance to closing of frontier which was probably due to fear of disturbances. Austrian Government is not informing the press at present in order not to cause alarm.

As result of interview with Austrian Chancellor Minister of the Interior recognizes necessity of plebiscite and has left for Berlin to explain this.

I have repeated this and my immediately preceding telegram to Budapest as well as four other posts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. No. 1, note 3.

## No. 12

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 9.10 a.m.)*  
*No. 62 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2318/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

It is officially announced that all rumours regarding a postponement of the plebiscite are unfounded, that a free and secret vote is open to all, that voting-papers marked 'No' will be available, that it is absolutely incorrect to say that the plebiscite is directed against the policy of July 11 and February 12<sup>1</sup> and that the Front Leader on the contrary wishes the people of Austria to vote their agreement with the continuation of that policy by which he is guided.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the German-Austrian agreements of July 11, 1936 and of February 12, 1938 (the 'Berchtesgaden Agreement'). Cf. No. 132.

## No. 13

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 10.20 a.m.)*  
*No. 85 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [R 2325/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

His Majesty's Consul-General Munich reports general mobilisation in Bavaria and troops pouring towards Austrian frontier.

Repeated to Vienna.



No. 14

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 10.50 a.m.)*

*No. 84 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2237/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Though I cannot judge motives which have inspired him Dr. Schuschnigg's action as seen from this post seems precipitous and unwise. It is true that he has merely taken a leaf out of Nazi book but that does not prevent pot from calling kettle black and hasty form of plebiscite certainly exposes it to facile criticism. Opinion here is uncompromisingly hostile and I am afraid it will be difficult for Herr Hitler not to yield this time to extremist advice, particularly in view of fact that new development has taken place so shortly after Berchtesgaden agreement, thus giving appearance of definite defiance.

German methods are indefensible but at the same time I fear Dr. Schuschnigg may be risking Austrian independence in attempt to save his own position.

Repeated to Vienna.

No. 15

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) (Received March 11, 11.45 a.m.)*

*No. 73 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2340/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 11, 1938

My telegrams Nos. 70 and 71.<sup>1</sup>

I am particularly anxious that the warnings I gave yesterday to Herr von Ribbentrop regarding the Austrian situation in general (i.e. the whole of my telegram No. 70) and the plebiscite in particular (i.e. paragraph 2 of my telegram No. 71) should reach Herr Hitler without delay and in as accurate a form as possible. You should take immediate steps to ensure this. I leave it to you to decide the procedure, but the most satisfactory method would of course be for you to see the Chancellor himself.

You should leave a copy of my warnings with whomever you do see.

Repeated to Paris, Vienna, Prague and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 8 and 9.

No. 16

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 12.50 p.m.)*

*No. 86 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2341/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 73.<sup>1</sup>

I had already arranged to see Baron von Neurath at 5 o'clock this afternoon and shall carry out your instructions through him at any rate in the first instance.

<sup>1</sup> No. 15.

## No. 17

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 1.45 p.m.)  
No. 65 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [R 2342/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My telegram No. 61.<sup>1</sup>

The Chancellor was presented this morning with ultimatum from Minister of the Interior and Glaise-Horstenau<sup>2</sup> demanding abandonment of plebiscite and threatening that in case of refusal Nazis would abstain from voting and could not be restrained from causing serious disturbances during voting. They also demanded positions in provincial governments and other bodies. They demanded answer by 1 p.m.

Chancellor declined to accept ultimatum or to call off Sunday's plebiscite. He asked them to consider compromise by which a second plebiscite should be held later with regular voting list but will in the meantime definitely make it clear that voters may vote 'yes' for his policy but 'no' for Dr. Schuschnigg so as to make it clear that plebiscite is not personal question of his remaining in office.

They are referring this nominally to their supporters but really of course to Herr Hitler.

<sup>1</sup> No. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. von Glaise-Horstenau joined Dr. Schuschnigg's Cabinet, as Minister without Portfolio, after the Austro-German agreement of July 11, 1936. He represented the 'pronounced Nationalist' ('betont National') faction. He was again included in the Cabinet under the Berchtesgaden agreement and remained in close contact with the German Government.

## No. 18

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received March 11, 1.50 p.m.)  
No. 87 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2348/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

My telegram No. 85.<sup>1</sup>

I asked Military Attaché to make enquiries at Ministry of War. He was informed by officer of Attaché's group that no orders for troop movements had been issued from Ministry of War, that Ministry of War had no knowledge of troop movements in Bavaria, that any idea of an approaching march towards Austrian frontier was ridiculous and that should any troop movement have been seen they could probably be ascribed to ordinary spring training.

As against this, there are

1. His Majesty's Consul-General's Munich report.
2. Report from an Englishman at Nuremberg that troops are being assembled there, that there is considerable air activity and that sale of petrol to the public is prohibited.

<sup>1</sup> No. 13.

3. Report from His Majesty's Consul, Dresden, that although he has seen no troop movement in the town he has observed unusual staff activity.

4. Statement of Lithuanian Military Attaché that from personal observation he has reason to believe that third Armoured Division is mobilizing in Berlin.

5. Admission by Ministry of Propaganda to Reuter's correspondent that troop movements are taking place in Bavaria though on small scale in order to meet any possible eventuality on Sunday.

6. Movement of field and medium artillery in Berlin has been observed.

Military Attaché gained the definite impression that his informant at Ministry of War was prevaricating.

Repeated to Vienna.

#### No. 19

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 3.0 p.m.)*

*No. 67 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2354/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Under threat of civil war and absolutely certain menace of military invasion Chancellor gave way rather than risk bloodshed in Austria and perhaps in Europe. He agreed to cancel Sunday's plebiscite on condition that tranquillity of country was not disturbed by Nazis.

This was referred to Hitler by Minister of the Interior who was told that it was not enough and that Dr. Schuschnigg must resign and be replaced by Minister of the Interior. Dr. Schuschnigg asks for *immediate* advice of His Majesty's Government as to what he should do. He has been given only an hour to decide.

<sup>1</sup> No. 20. The arrival of these two telegrams in reverse order was probably due to the fact that one of them was sent *en clair*.

#### No. 20

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 3.15 p.m.)*

*No. 66 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2353/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Situation is critical. If the Chancellor gives way it will be the end of him and of Austrian independence: if he holds firm he is faced by threat of armed action by Germany when disturbances take place (or rather are engineered) during the plebiscite. You will have learnt from Munich of semi-mobilisation taking place in Bavaria of which Austrian Government have complete information including numbers of trains directed on Passau.

<sup>1</sup> No. 17.

Minister of the Interior did not go to Germany but Glaise-Horstenau who was there saw Herr Hitler. I understand he raged like a madman for an hour and declared that holding of plebiscite represented defeat for him and he would not allow it.

Italian Minister has been informed and Austrian Government are anxiously awaiting message from Rome. It is unfortunate that no French Government exists at the moment.<sup>2</sup>

I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs only for a few moments this morning as he was called to the Chancellor and above information comes mostly from Political Director with whom I waited to hear what had been Dr. Schuschnigg's reply to his treacherous colleague's ultimatum. He said the Austrian Government wished you to know what was happening but for the moment made no appeal to His Majesty's Government and so far they have said nothing to the press. Political Director thinks Dr. Schuschnigg should tell the world what is happening and how a threat from outside is being disguised as pressure from inside: though the military measures in Bavaria make the disguise very thin.

<sup>2</sup> The French Government had resigned on March 10.

### No. 21

*Mr. Palairret (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 3.35 p.m.)*  
*No. 68 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2366/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

When Minister of Interior and Glaise-Horstenau returned to Dr. Schuschnigg the latter offered every guarantee that plebiscite would be freely carried out as a genuine expression of opinion. Minister of Interior said that this was not enough and if abolition of plebiscite were not agreed to by 3 o'clock he would resign and thus destroy basis of Berchtesgaden agreement.

<sup>1</sup> No. 19.

### No. 22

*Mr. Palairret (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11)<sup>1</sup>*  
*No. 69 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2355/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938.

Austrian Government wish Foreign Office to know that a *démenti* of ultimatum now published by German news service is totally untrue. Ultimatum is positive fact: Minister of the Interior is now waiting to send Schuschnigg's answer which has to be delivered by 5.30 (Berlin<sup>2</sup> time 4.30) and German troops are to be set in motion at 6 (English time 5) if it is not satisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.

<sup>2</sup> This appears to be an error for 'English'.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 4.0 p.m.)*

*No. 88 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2356/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Austrian Minister called this morning before going to see the Secretary of State<sup>1</sup> at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He told me that he would explain that the plebiscite was in no sense directed against Germany and that allegations made here to the effect that it had been insufficiently prepared or was contrary to Constitution were quite unfounded.

I told him that, while I never doubted that this was so and while I deeply sympathised with Dr. Schuschnigg in his difficult predicament I was impressed with the extreme gravity of the situation. Even moderate elements here regarded abrupt decision to hold this plebiscite as provocative and agreed that in the event of bloodshed in Austria Herr Hitler would be unable to hold back his extremists.

I gave him my information as regards the partial mobilization in Bavaria, of which he was unaware, and told him that I was seeing Baron von Neurath this afternoon and would do my utmost to warn the German Government against precipitate action.

French Ambassador, who came to see me later, told me that his information was that three German columns were advancing on the frontier and anticipated their entry into Austria this evening. I told him that while I still doubted this, I was convinced that military preparations were being made to enter Austria in the event of a clash there leading to actual bloodshed. I also informed him of the action I contemplated through Baron von Neurath. (I had not then received your telegram No. 73<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the (acting) State Secretary, Baron von Weizsäcker, who received the appointment officially on April 1.

<sup>2</sup> No. 15.

## No. 24

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11)<sup>1</sup>*

*No. 89 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2357/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

The following strictly *unofficial* statement, i.e. not for quotation as such, has been obtained by a British correspondent from the Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau: 'Rumour current in Fatherland Front circles in Vienna according to which the Reich Government has demanded from the Austrian Government under an ultimatum the postponement of the so-called plebiscite is explained in political circles here as a sign of the extraordinary nervousness of the former circles. Nothing is known here of such an alleged ultimatum.

The other rumour current in Vienna according to which it has been

<sup>1</sup> The hour of receipt of this telegram is not recorded.



announced on the German wireless that the Reich would draw extreme conclusions if the Austrian Chancellor did not renounce his so-called plebiscite is equally pure invention and is probably to be ascribed to the fact that some foreign agitator station had put out some such news. With reference to the messages from different foreign sources that concentrations of troops and S.A. are taking place in Germany it is declared here in informed quarters that there can be no question of any abnormal troop movement in Germany. Individual frontier guards on the Austrian frontier have received small reinforcements, a measure which is easily comprehensible in view of the indignation of the Austrian people and the passionate sympathy of the Reich Germany [*sic*] and racially identical frontier population.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Vienna.

#### No. 25

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Palairet (Vienna) (Received March 11, 4.30 p.m.)  
No. 31 Telegraphic: [?] by telephone [R 2354/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 67.<sup>1</sup>

We have spoken strongly to von Ribbentrop on effect that would be produced in this country by such direct interference in Austrian affairs as demand for resignation of Chancellor enforced by ultimatum, especially after offer to cancel plebiscite. Ribbentrop's attitude was not encouraging but he has gone off to telephone to Berlin.

His Majesty's Government cannot take responsibility of advising the Chancellor to take any course of action which might expose his country to dangers against which His Majesty's Government are unable to guarantee protection.

Repeated by telephone to Berlin, Paris, Prague, Rome and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 19.

#### No. 26

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 5.15 p.m.)  
No. 70 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2367/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

En clair part of your telegram No. 31<sup>1</sup> has been communicated to Chancellor who thanks you for the action taken. May I learn for his information result of von Ribbentrop's telephone communication with Berlin?

Chancellor has not yet replied to ultimatum. French Government are urging him to gain time and French Minister has suggested putting matters on diplomatic basis by enquiring of German Legation here how official German *démenti* of ultimatum is to be reconciled with facts. Austrian Government are endeavouring to do this.

<sup>1</sup> No. 25, first paragraph.



No. 27

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 5.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 74 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2369/137/3]*

PARIS, March 11, 1938

Secretary-General at Ministry of Foreign Affairs tells me that French Chargé d'Affaires at Rome applied for interview with Count Ciano, who sent curt message back that if object of interview was Austria, that was a subject regarding which Italian Government had no reason to concert with France or Great Britain.

No. 28

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*  
*No. 84 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2354/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 11, 1938, 5.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 31<sup>1</sup> to Vienna.

Please seek immediate interview with Signor Mussolini and inform him of the action we have taken as given in the first paragraph and invite him to give us his views.

It is understood that French Government too will be seeking the views of Signor Mussolini.

If Signor Mussolini asks whether His Majesty's Government have given any advice to Austrian Chancellor, you should answer that we have, in the light of the impossibility within the time limit of consulting other Governments, replied to Herr von Schuschnigg as in the second paragraph of my telegram under reference.

<sup>1</sup> No. 25.

No. 29

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 77 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2354/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 11, 1938, 6.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 31<sup>1</sup> to Vienna.

You should *at once* communicate to German Government the first sentence of my telegram under reference.

<sup>1</sup> No. 25.

No. 30

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 6.9 p.m.)*  
*No. 71 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [R 2368/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

Official ultimatum has just been brought by aeroplane from Germany. Demands are:

Resignation of Chancellor and replacement by Minister of the Interior:

A new Cabinet to be two-thirds Nazi:

Austrian Legion to be re-admitted to the country and given duty of keeping order in Vienna:

Total re-admission of Nazi Party.

Chancellor had to give reply before 7.30 (6.30 English time). He wishes you to be informed at once in hope that you may have message for him. If he yields any semblance of Austrian independence is gone.

No. 31

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 7.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 93 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2378/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 77.<sup>1</sup>

I only received your telegram No. 31<sup>2</sup> to Vienna after I had seen Baron von Neurath and I was half-way through an urgent note to him in its sense when I received your telegram under reference. I have now communicated text of first sentence as telegraphed.

His Excellency mentioned Herr von Ribbentrop had wished to return here at once but that Chancellor had told him to stop in [? London].<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 29.

<sup>2</sup> No. 25.

<sup>3</sup> The text here is uncertain.

No. 32

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received March 11, 7.10 p.m.)*

*No. 92 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2377/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 73.<sup>1</sup>

I have spoken to Baron von Neurath in the sense of your instructions and handed to him texts from your telegrams Nos. 70 and 71.<sup>2</sup> I begged him to communicate them at once to the Chancellor and he promised to do so.

His Excellency expressed great indignation at what he described as precipitate and provocative action of the Austrian Chancellor. It was on his (Baron von Neurath's) instigation that interview at Berchtesgaden had taken place. European opinion had most unjustifiably been shaken by those negotiations

<sup>1</sup> No. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 8 and 9.

effect of which had in fact been to avoid just such an explosion as now seemed inevitable. He admitted that the situation was exceedingly serious and that if there was bloodshed in Austria German troops would certainly enter to prevent further bloodshed. There was, he said, no doubt of that whatsoever.

He said what German Government was asking was that plebiscite should be postponed for a fortnight to give time for proper lists to be prepared and measures taken to ensure impartiality. As instance of partiality of Sunday's plebiscite he quoted the fact that 30 odd thousand of Austrian Nazis in Germany would not be allowed to vote. He added that the frontier had been closed to prevent these latter from returning to Austria to add to the trouble.

Baron von Neurath's attitude was on the whole reasonable and he expressed ready appreciation of the importance of points of view held by you in speaking to Herr von Ribbentrop. I reinforced their gravity by all means in my power and asked him earnestly to represent these views to the Chancellor. He said that he would do his best but that Dr. Schuschnigg's provocation (a word which he repeated throughout) had made it difficult for moderates to restrain Herr Hitler.

Repeated to Vienna.

### No. 33

*Mr. Palairot (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 7.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 72 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2382/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Chancellor has just announced on the wireless that in view of German threat of invasion within an hour he had yielded to Hitler's demands in order to avoid shedding of German blood. He denied categorically all German reports of unrest in Austria and said that he wished the world to know that the President and he had yielded to force. Austrian troops had been instructed to oppose no resistance to German troops if they crossed frontier and to retire slowly.

He took farewell of his hearers with the words: 'God protect Austria'.

<sup>1</sup> No. 30.

### No. 34

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received March 11, 7.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 95 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2380/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

My telegram No. 87.<sup>1</sup>

Attaché group at Ministry of War summoned the Assistant Military Attaché this evening in the temporary absence of the Military Attaché.

<sup>1</sup> No. 18.

The officer in charge appeared highly embarrassed and began by apologizing at length for the necessity for the incorrect statement made to the Military Attaché this morning. He said that the political situation has made it necessary to stage a strong demonstration on the Austrian frontier and a considerable force of all arms was accordingly being concentrated there. There were he continued two objects behind this demonstration:

(1) The prevention of disorders of Marxist origin from spreading to Germany.

(2) Armed intervention is absolutely necessary to protect the genuine Germans against the above Marxist elements.

In reply to Assistant Military Attaché's request for further information regarding the German units involved, the officer said that he regretted he could give no more details.

### No. 35

*Mr. Palairer (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 7.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 73 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2383/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Austrian Government wish you to know that facts of situation are that President refused to accept ultimatum and that German troops were thus given order to march in. Minister of Interior has just broadcast announcement that German troops are marching into Austria and that no resistance will be offered. He states that he is still Minister of Interior.

<sup>1</sup> No. 33.

### No. 36

*Mr. Palairer (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 7.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 74 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2384/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

Following is translation of text of Chancellor's broadcast summarised in my telegram No. 72:<sup>1</sup>

I have to give my Austrian fellow countrymen the details of the eventful day and the grave situation. I declare before the whole world that German Government today handed to President Miklas an ultimatum with a time limit attached ordering him to nominate as Chancellor the person designated by German Government, who would appoint the Government satisfactory to them otherwise German troops would invade Austria.

I have to declare before the world that the news issued in Germany concerning disorder created by the workers, shedding of blood, and the situation which had got out of control of the Government, are his<sup>2</sup> from A to Z. The

<sup>1</sup> No. 33. See also No. 132.

<sup>2</sup> This word should read 'lies'.

President asks me to tell the people of Austria that he had yielded to force. Since we were not prepared, even in this terrible situation, to shed blood, we decided to order the troops to offer no serious—the Chancellor corrected himself—to offer no resistance. Inspector General of Army General Schilhawsky, has been placed in command of the troops, he will issue further orders to them.

So I take leave of the Austrian people, with a German word of farewell from the depths of my heart 'God protect Austria'.

No. 37

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received March 11, 8.0 p.m.)

*No. 94 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2379/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Military Attaché this afternoon reconnoitred the Berlin–Leipzig road. He noted a total of well over 3,000 armed police in convoys totalling about 250 motor vehicles and 150 motor-cycles. Convoys included numerous wireless cars, petrol tankers, petrol vehicles and Berlin motor-buses. Various derelicts at roadside, mainly S.S. vehicles.

From this and information from other sources it looks as if it is intended that any action taken should be entrusted to S.S. and police in first instance.

No. 38

*Mr. Palairret (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 8.30 p.m.)*

*No. 77 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2386/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

Following official statement has just been issued.

'The Federal President has, under the pressure of external political conditions and the threat of a military occupation of the country by the German Reich, entrusted Federal Minister Seyss-Inquart at the demand of Germany with carrying on the Government.'

No. 39

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 79 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [R 2368/173/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 11, 1938, 9.0 p.m.

Vienna telegram No. 71.<sup>1</sup>

Please represent immediately to German Government that, if this report is correct, His Majesty's Government feel bound to register protest in strongest terms against such use of coercion, backed by force, against an independent

<sup>1</sup> No. 30.



State, in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence.

As I have already pointed out to German Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>2</sup> here, such action is bound to produce gravest reactions of which it is impossible to foretell the issue.

I am informing the French Government that this protest is being made in case they wish to act likewise.

<sup>2</sup> Herr von Ribbentrop. See No. 8, note 1.

#### No. 40

*Mr. Palairot (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 9.0 p.m.)*

*No. 75 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2385/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 11, 1938

Up to now Austrian Ministry of War has no confirmation of any German troops having crossed frontier.

Minister of the Interior has just declared on the wireless that he is responsible for maintaining order. He appeals for discipline during the next hours and days: Nazi organization would take steps to keep order. Instructions of executives must be obeyed and no opposition was to be offered if the German army marched in.

#### No. 41

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax  
(Received March 11, 9.0 p.m.)*

*No. 96 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2381/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

It is announced here by the Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau that Seyss-Inquart has appealed to German Government to send troops to keep order.

#### No. 42

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 9.10 p.m.)*

*No. 91 Telegraphic [R 2376/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938, 8.30 p.m.

Following received from Consul-General, Munich, No. 4 of March 11.

Begins:—

Mobilization orders issued at midnight last night, concentration began one a.m. this morning. First to be called up were army mechanized units. Private transport commandeered. S.S. auxiliaries at Dachau mobilised and S.A. summoned by motor cycle despatch riders. S.A. placed on duty around Munich. Reservists called up and confined to barracks also police.



Troops are being moved along all roads towards Czechoslovakia and Austrian frontiers. Concentration of S.A. also at Starberg. Schools are closed at Munich also certain roads leading to frontiers. I have addressed official enquiries to Bavarian Government saying that a large number of British subjects have asked whether they should leave Bavaria and I have been told that there is no information in the hands of Government but that Embassy should make enquiries at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Private and confidential.

It is said that it is only a demonstration. Following rumours have been spread by National Socialist Party that Czechoslovaks have crossed into Austria, that French Communists have arrived to organize Communist revolt and that Austrian Government have gone red and are shooting Austrian National Socialists.

### No. 43

*Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 11, 10.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 129 Telegraphic [R 2393/137/3]*

ROME, March 11, 1938, 9.30 p.m.

French Chargé d'Affaires came to see me this evening and told me that he had received instructions from his Government when the latter had learnt of troop movements on German side of Austrian frontier to ask for an interview with Count Ciano at 6.30 p.m. This was arranged. At 5 o'clock Paris telephoned him again telling him of the two-point ultimatum which had been addressed by Herr Hitler to Dr. Schuschnigg, namely the postponement of the plebiscite and Dr. Schuschnigg's resignation. The first he said Dr. Schuschnigg had accepted but as regards the second Dr. Schuschnigg had asked for advice from Paris, London and Rome. The French Foreign Office had stated that I was to receive instructions to endeavour to see Signor Mussolini and ask him whether he would share responsibility for advice with the French Government and His Majesty's Government. M. Blondel was to do the same with Count Ciano.

M. Blondel asked if I had received any instructions. I said No. M. Blondel had rung up Palazzo Chigi and enquired whether he could see Count Ciano at once. The answer came from Count Ciano's private secretary that if subject was Austria Count Ciano 'n'avait rien à concerter ni avec la France ni avec l'Angleterre au sujet de la situation autrichienne'.

M. Blondel begged however that if I received instructions to make a *démarche* I would not refuse on the ground that he had already received Count Ciano's reply. My own feeling is that the best chance of Italy being able to secure any amelioration of the situation will be if she acts alone. Such influence as she can exert will only be impaired if Berlin thinks she is moving at British and French instigation.

Repeated to Paris and Vienna.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*<sup>1</sup>

No. 331 [R 2394/137/3]

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 11, 1938

Sir,

The Prime Minister gave a luncheon-party to-day in honour of Herr von Ribbentrop and Frau von Ribbentrop. Before the party broke up two telegrams were handed to me regarding the progress of events in Austria, from which it appeared that an ultimatum had been delivered to the Austrian Chancellor, calling for his resignation with a time-limit that was stated. The Prime Minister accordingly asked Herr von Ribbentrop to speak to him and to myself before leaving. There were also present Sir A. Cadogan and Dr. Woermann.

2. The Prime Minister read the relevant portions of the telegrams to Herr von Ribbentrop and emphasized the extreme gravity of the situation they disclosed. His Excellency said that he had no information, but would at once return to the Embassy and place himself in communication with Berlin. If, however, the information in the telegrams were true, and he found it difficult to accept without confirmation, he thought that it might be the best way of achieving what he was pleased to call a peaceful solution, for, after all that had passed, it was not to be expected that Herr von Schuschnigg would be able to pacify the country. The Austrian Chancellor had gone back on the Berchtesgaden agreement and the great majority of the country was now strongly opposed to him. The Prime Minister urged Herr von Ribbentrop to lose no time in repeating to Herr Hitler how serious a view we took of these latest developments and of the deplorable effect that they must exercise on the future tenor of Anglo-German relations.

3. I subsequently called by appointment on Herr von Ribbentrop at 5.15 p.m. I then showed him a further telegram that we had received to the effect that the ultimatum was a positive fact, that the Minister of the Interior was then waiting to send Herr von Schuschnigg's answer, which had to be delivered by 4.30 p.m. (Berlin time 5.30 p.m.), and that German troops were to be set in motion at 5 p.m. (Berlin time 6 p.m.) if it was not satisfactory. In reply to this, Herr von Ribbentrop told me that he had telephoned to the Foreign Office at Berlin, and they had no such information as the Prime Minister had communicated to him at lunch. He seemed frankly mystified by it and was unwilling to accept the suggestion that I made that Herr Hitler might have acted on his own without reference to the German Foreign Office.

4. At this moment Dr. Woermann came in with a message that had just come through for Herr von Ribbentrop, to the effect that Herr von Schuschnigg had resigned and that Herr Seyss-Inquart was now Chancellor. This information supplied the text for a further address by Herr von Ribbentrop

<sup>1</sup> Paragraphs 3-7 of this despatch were summarized in a telegram sent to Sir N. Henderson at 8.15 p.m. on March 12.

to the effect that this was really much the best thing that could have happened, and that I should surely agree that it was the object of us all to see peaceful solutions arrived at of obstinate problems. I might take it that Herr von Schuschnigg had completely gone back on his word from the Berchtesgaden arrangements, that the situation was quite impossible, and that, if the German Government had acted strongly, it was to avoid major evils that would have been otherwise inevitable. If the position was viewed from the realist angle, it was surely an advantage that some one problem should be got out of the way. He could not believe that the English people, who were never unwilling to face facts, would fail to reach this conclusion. The settlement of the Austrian problem would by so far render Anglo-German relations more easy of solution by the removal of one difficulty that, though he thought unnecessarily, was held by us to complicate their achievement. His Excellency concluded by a reference to the general necessity, under which nations from time to time lay, of acting with decision in a manner that others might sometimes think hard. Had we not had to do so from time to time with Ireland? Yet Germany had never thought of raising objection to what we thought right in a sphere that specifically concerned us.

5. When Herr von Ribbentrop finished, I told him that I had no difficulty at all in assenting to his proposition in the abstract that everybody could welcome peaceful solutions of difficult problems, but what was happening in this case could by no stretch of language be brought within such a category. What we were witnessing was an exhibition of naked force, and the public opinion of Europe would inevitably ask when the facts were known what there was to prevent the German Government from seeking to apply in similar fashion naked force to the solution of their problems in Czechoslovakia or to any other in which they thought it might be useful. The conclusion must be that the German leaders were people who had no use for negotiation, but relied solely on the strong hand. How could he expect but that this general conclusion would seriously prejudice the future of Anglo-German relations that it had been, as I hoped, both his purpose and mine to endeavour to improve? The English people had never denied that there was a real problem to solve in Austria, but they would violently resent, unless I was much mistaken, the method by which it had been chosen to solve it. Nor, indeed, could we be as yet sure that a solution had been effected. Time only would show to what extent that which had been done, quite apart from method, could justify such a title.

6. As to the analogy with Ireland, his Excellency would forgive me for saying that I had heard it before and one could hardly imagine an analogy that had less substance. Whatever might be thought about the troubles in Ireland of some years ago, at least they had happened when Ireland was as much a part of the United Kingdom as London or Yorkshire. But what had recently passed in Austria had been passing between two independent States. I could give him, if he would allow me, a much nearer analogy. Suppose Great Britain to regard, as she did, Belgium as a vital point of Europe to her, and suppose Great Britain suddenly to say to the Belgian Government that, unless

they dismissed their Prime Minister, who, for the sake of argument, might be unfavourable to England, and appointed another within a time-limit, we should bombard Antwerp, I ventured to suggest that this was a much closer parallel to recent Austrian events.

7. Finally, Herr von Ribbentrop reverted again to the question of the effect of all this on Anglo-German relations, and stressed his belief that public opinion might, without much difficulty, be guided to take a realist view of what had passed and not be unwilling eventually to welcome it. I told him that I thought in this I could anticipate British and world opinion more accurately than he, and that my own estimate was that these events would have put back for a long time the growth of friendly understanding that the majority of English people had been disposed to desire.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

#### No. 45

*Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 131 Telegraphic [R 2396/137/3]*

ROME, March 12, 2.35 a.m.

Your telegram No. 84.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with your instructions I will ask Count Ciano to arrange interview with Signor Mussolini.

If, however, the former deprecates such a request at present juncture, I will again refer to you for instructions. You will, I trust, bear in mind possible repercussions, as regards conversations, of insistence against advice of Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is my belief that I can obtain full expression of Signor Mussolini's views about existing situation in Austria through Count Ciano, particularly as (? the matter must have?)<sup>2</sup> formed subject of anxious deliberation by Fascist Grand Council which is meeting again tonight.

<sup>1</sup> No. 28.

<sup>2</sup> The text here is uncertain.

#### No. 46

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 7.45 a.m.)  
No. 97 Telegraphic [R 2389/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 12, 1938, 3.38 a.m.

I have just seen General Göring and spoken to him in the sense of your telegram No. 79.<sup>1</sup> I have also sent a letter<sup>2</sup> to Baron von Neurath to the same effect. General Göring denied that Germany had sent any ultimatum at all which he described as having been given by Austrians to Austrians. This is technically true though General Göring admitted that Seyss-Inquart and

<sup>1</sup> No. 39.

<sup>2</sup> No. 47.



Horstenau had consulted Berlin. (? He said that)<sup>3</sup> only condition Herr Hitler had made was that some 35,000 exiled Austrian Nazis should be allowed to return to Austria. General Göring informed me that German troops were now entering Austria. There would also be what he described as a peaceful air demonstration tomorrow. In reply to my violent protests he said that this action was being taken at direct request of Seyss-Inquart who feared Communist trouble particularly in Wiener Neustadt. He gave me his word that troops would be withdrawn as soon as situation was stable and that after withdrawal free election would be held without any intimidation whatever. Foreign correspondents would be invited to assist to see (? that)<sup>3</sup> freedom was observed.

General Göring's standpoint was that Dr. Schuschnigg had broken Berchtesgaden agreement and that Chancellor refused to trust him any longer. I told him that while I reluctantly agreed that Dr. Schuschnigg had acted with precipitate folly (and indeed if he intended so to act he had better have done so after Berchtesgaden and refused agreement of February 15 [*sic*]) but that Germany was now behaving as a bully and menacing whole peace of Europe.

General Göring also told me that Herr Hitler would be going to Bavaria tomorrow and I gathered he wishes to cross frontier himself and visit grave of his mother. During Chancellor's absence General Göring will represent him here at Berlin. He professed to believe German troops would be received by whole population except Wiener Neustadt and Jews with enthusiasm. He said that every Marxist there had a Nazi opposite number.

Nothing that I could say was of any avail and indeed I was not unprepared since Seyss-Inquart's broadcast on taking over Chancellorship foreshadowed possible entry of German troops.

He also told me he had given his word to Czechoslovak Minister that no action was contemplated against his country.

French Ambassador has addressed similar protest in writing to Baron von Neurath on lines of your telegram under reference and will, I understand, make verbal protest tomorrow.

Repeated to Vienna.

<sup>3</sup> The text here is uncertain.

## No. 47

*Sir N. Henderson to Baron von Neurath*

BERLIN, March 11, 1938

Dear Reichsminister,

My Government are informed that a German ultimatum was delivered this afternoon at Vienna demanding, *inter alia*, the resignation of the Chancellor and his replacement by the Minister of the Interior, a new Cabinet of which two-thirds of the members were to be National Socialists and the re-admission of the Austrian Legion to the country with the duty of keeping order in Vienna.

I am instructed by my Government to represent immediately to the German Government that if this report is correct His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom feel bound to register a protest in the strongest terms against such use of coercion backed by force against an independent State in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence.

As the German Minister for Foreign Affairs has already been informed in London, such action is bound to produce the gravest reactions of which it is impossible to foretell the issues.

Yours sincerely,

(For the Ambassador),

I. A. KIRKPATRICK

No. 48

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received March 12, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 98 Telegraphic [R 2391/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 12, 3.30 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

It will of course be open to me to see Göring again tomorrow but I fear nothing short of force can have any effect at all. I fear Dr. Schuschnigg has let us all down badly by his rash decision taken without consulting members of his Government thereby enabling the latter to assume technical authorship of ultimatum.

Unless we are prepared to use force I can only recommend that I be instructed to insist on execution of undertakings given to me by General Göring that troops shall be withdrawn as soon as possible and that 'completely free elections' be thereafter held. True, Austrian independence will have vanished and short of its forcible restitution the best thing to work for is independence on lines of pre-war Bavaria.

<sup>1</sup> No. 46.

No. 49

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received March 12, 11.45 a.m.)*

*No. 101 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2423/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 12, 1938

I greatly regret failure of my efforts here to prevent series of events as regards Austria. It can however be stated that everything that could be done short of direct threat of force, was done here to save Austria from consequences of Dr. Schuschnigg's ill-conceived and ill-prepared folly. French Ambassador was handicapped by non-existence of French Government so that the brunt of battle fell practically entirely on myself and my personal interventions with



Baron von Neurath and Field-Marshal Göring, as well as written communication to the former, constitute in my view the utmost that could be done. I did not attempt to see the Chancellor because firstly I had no doubt but that some excuse would have been found to put me off until after the accomplished fact and because interview on March 3<sup>1</sup> left no shadow of doubt but that my representations would have led to no result. I felt it undesirable to expose His Majesty's representative to this double rebuff.

I warned both Baron von Neurath and Field-Marshal Göring that German action would inevitably do irretrievable harm in England in respect of any attempt on our part to come to an understanding with Germany. Both profess to deplore this while asserting that their action was unavoidable in view of Dr. Schuschnigg's provocation.

<sup>1</sup> For this interview, see preceding volume in this Collection.

## No. 50

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 12.0 noon)*  
*No. 100 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2422/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 12, 1938

Goebbels received the foreign press at 11 o'clock this morning and read a proclamation by the Chancellor which is to be issued on the German wireless at noon.

The proclamation repeats at some length the history of the Austrian question as seen through Herr Hitler's eyes. The intolerable oppression by a minority clique of the Austrians on account of their natural feelings of friendship and attachment to Germany, the two attempts he made to reach a pacific settlement with Dr. Schuschnigg (Herr Hitler said that he, an elected representative, had deigned to treat with a rump [? Chancellor]<sup>1</sup>), the latter's breach of his undertakings, the rising indignation of the Austrian people which made the continuance of the Schuschnigg régime impossible. If a colonial settlement is made dependent on the wishes of the natives, what is one to think of the violation of the sentiments of an old and cultured people? Finally came the Schuschnigg plebiscite, which was a barefaced attempt to perpetuate the existing régime of injustice.

In consequence of these events the German Government had decided to afford their whole support to the Austrian people and in reply to a request from Dr. Artur Seyss-Inquart German troops were at the moment advancing into Austria, divisions, mechanized units, S.S. formations and in the blue sky the German Air Force. A free election would subsequently be held.

At the conclusion Herr Hitler foreshadowed his intending visit to Austria.

After reading the proclamation Dr. Goebbels said he had three statements to make

(1) German troops entered Austria at 6.30 this morning and not last night.

<sup>1</sup> The text here is uncertain.

(2) Seyss-Inquart's request for German troops was genuine.

(3) There had been no ultimatum from German but rather from Austrian Ministers.

Dr. Goebbels to the general disappointment did not explain why, if the Nazis enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the Austrian people as stated in Herr Hitler's proclamation, it was necessary to send troops to help them.

#### No. 51

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 2.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 85 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2410/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 12

Approximately two thousand German troops fully equipped and armed have been landed at Aspern by 200 transport planes (three-engine junkers bombers) at rate of 50 planes an hour. As further intimidation of Austria is quite unnecessary only explanation of this proceeding seems to be desire to impress the world with German striking power. German and Austrian troops are fraternising.

#### No. 52

*Viscount Halifax to Earl of Perth (Rome)*  
*No. 89 Telegraphic [R 2396/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 12, 1938, 3.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 131.<sup>1</sup>

If Count Ciano deprecates or shows resentment at the idea of your having an interview with Mussolini on the subject of Austria, you are authorised to raise the matter with Count Ciano instead.

The situation has of course radically changed since my telegram No. 84<sup>2</sup> was despatched, and you should now raise the subject in a more general form in the light of my protest to the German Government (see my telegram No. 79<sup>3</sup> to Berlin) consequent on the second ultimatum of yesterday (see Vienna telegram No. 71),<sup>4</sup> which has brought about the overthrow of the Schuschnigg Government and the setting up of a puppet Government at the dictation of Germany.

<sup>1</sup> No. 45.

<sup>2</sup> No. 28.

<sup>3</sup> No. 39.

<sup>4</sup> No. 30.

#### No. 53

*Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 6.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 138 Telegraphic [R 2396/137/3]*

ROME, March 12, 1938, 4.45 p.m.

I told Count Ciano this morning that I was instructed to ask for an interview with Head of the Government in order to inform him that on receipt of

Dr. Schuschnigg's message asking for advice my Government had spoken strongly to Herr von Ribbentrop about the effect which would be produced in United Kingdom by such direct interference in Austrian affairs as demand for resignation of the Chancellor enforced by an ultimatum particularly after offer of the Chancellor to cancel the plebiscite. I said that Herr von Ribbentrop's attitude had not been encouraging but he had telephoned to Berlin evidently without effect. I then read him instruction contained in Foreign Office telegram to Berlin No. 79.<sup>1</sup> Count Ciano asked if he could take a copy of this and I said that I had no objection. At interview I was to ascertain, on instructions from my Government, Signor Mussolini's views about the new situation in Austria.

Count Ciano clearly indicated that he thought it would be very unwise if I pressed request for an interview. He reminded me of what had taken place yesterday evening with regard to French Chargé d'Affaires. The latter had telephoned urgently asking that he might see him in order to concert with Italian Government about events in Austria. Count Ciano said that he had at once consulted Signor Mussolini and that the latter had instructed him to inform M. Blondel that Italian Government had nothing to concert with French Government about Austria.

I said to Count Ciano that in these circumstances I would refer to you for further instructions about the proposed interview but I should be glad meanwhile if he could [? tell]<sup>2</sup> me Signor Mussolini's views on existing position. Count Ciano looked at me and shrugged his shoulders and said 'there is nothing to do. What can we do, we cannot force the people to be independent if they do not wish to be so.' He then gave me following information confidentially. The Italian Government knew of the invitation to Dr. Schuschnigg to go to Berchtesgaden but they had not been informed previously of demands Herr Hitler ultimately made of Dr. Schuschnigg. They had been told later of results. On Monday evening March 7 Dr. Schuschnigg had told Mussolini of his intention to hold plebiscite. Signor Mussolini had raised strongest objections but in spite of this Dr. Schuschnigg went forward. Present events were the result; but what was there to do? Nazi revolution in Austria was a *fait accompli* and had been received with greatest enthusiasm not only in Graz but also in Vienna and even Innsbruck. Police in Vienna had all gone out wearing ordinary brassards but had come back with Nazi emblems. He said that we must be realistic and recognize that you cannot force a people to be stable.

I said what my Government felt so strongly was violent interference by Herr Hitler in Austria's internal affairs. After all I assumed only 30 per cent. of Austrians were really Nazi supporters and without outside aid *coup* could never have taken place.

Count Ciano who carefully avoided any criticism whatever of Hitler said that it might be there were only 30 per cent. of supporters but this 30 per cent. were enthusiastic, well organized and young. The other 70 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> No. 39.

<sup>2</sup> The text here is uncertain.

were much older men without any strong views and greatly divided among themselves. Present revolution had been accomplished without any loss of life as far as he knew and might be compared to what had happened when Fascist march on Rome took place. Speaking most confidentially he told me Signor Mussolini had just received a long and very important letter from Herr Hitler communicating his views on situation and giving assurances about Italian interests. Letter had not yet been properly examined, but Italian Government were remaining in touch with German Government.

I asked him whether he thought Austria would retain her formal independence. The Minister for Foreign Affairs replied he could not prophesy on such a point. Situation was developing very quickly and Italian Government could only wait on events.

In view of probability that Prime Minister will be called on to make a statement in House of Commons on Monday about Austrian situation I am asking Count Ciano if he can give me for Prime Minister use of a form of words expressing attitude of Italian Government.

#### No. 54

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 82 Telegraphic [R 2389/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938, 5.0 p.m.*

I am disturbed to see from your telegram No. 97<sup>1</sup> that you told General Göring that you 'reluctantly agreed that Dr. Schuschnigg had acted with precipitate folly' in ordering a plebiscite. It may well be your personal view, as stated in your telegram No. 98<sup>2</sup> that 'Dr. Schuschnigg has let us all down badly by his rash decision taken without consulting members of his Government', and you are of course entitled to express that view in your communications to me. But I cannot help feeling that by the admission to General Göring quoted above you cannot but have diminished the force of the protest you were instructed to make in my telegram No. 79.<sup>3</sup>

There was not, I think, any doubt as to my own views on the subject of the plebiscite. They were fully set out in my telegram No. 71<sup>4</sup> in which I recorded my remarks on this subject to Herr von Ribbentrop and it is of first importance that any communications you make to German Government should conform to the instructions you receive from me and to the attitude I myself adopt in my communications to German representatives here.

In general I think it desirable that in any discussions you may have with General Göring or others, you should be particularly careful that you do not go beyond any instructions given or diminish in subsequent conversation force of any protest you may be instructed to make.

<sup>1</sup> No. 46.

<sup>2</sup> No. 48.

<sup>3</sup> No. 39.

<sup>4</sup> No. 9.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Palairot (Vienna)**No. 37 Telegraphic [R 2810/137/3]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938, 6.45 p.m.*

Considerable anxiety is evinced here regarding position of Jews and Socialists in Austria.

Though I realise that little can be done on their behalf, I hope that you will take any opportunity that offers of impressing on whatever authorities there may be with whom you can maintain contact that maltreatment of Jews or Socialists in Austria can only deepen the painful impression produced in this country by the events of the last few days.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 12, 6.45 p.m.)**No. 104 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2461/137/3]*BERLIN, *March 12, 1938*

I have received the following letter from Baron von Neurath in reply to my letter<sup>1</sup> reported in my telegram No. 97.<sup>2</sup>

Translation.

'Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

In your letter of March 11th Your Excellency stated that news had reached the British Government that a German ultimatum had been delivered in Vienna demanding the resignation of the Austrian Chancellor, his substitution by the Minister of the Interior, the formation of a new Cabinet with a two-third majority of National Socialist members and the readmission of the Austrian Legion. Should this news be correct the British Government protested against such coercion by force against an independent State in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence.

In the name of the German Government I must state in reply that the British Government is not within its right in claiming the role of a protector of the independence of Austria. In the course of the diplomatic conversations regarding the Austrian question the German Government have never left the British Government in doubt that the form of the relations between the Reich and Austria can only be regarded as an internal affair of the German people which is no concern of third Powers. It is superfluous to recapitulate the historical and political bases of this standpoint.

For this reason the German Government must from the outset reject as inadmissible the protest lodged by the British Government, even though only conditional. At the same time in view of the information quoted in your letter that the Reich Government had made demands of the character of an ultimatum in Vienna the German Government does not desire to omit, in the

<sup>1</sup> No. 47.<sup>2</sup> No. 46.



interests of truth, to make the following statement respecting the events of the last few days.

A few weeks ago the German Chancellor, recognising the dangers resulting from the intolerable position which had arisen in Austria, initiated a conversation with the then Austrian Chancellor. The aim was to make yet another attempt to meet these dangers by agreement upon measures which should ensure a calm and peaceful development in consonance with the interests of both countries and with those of the whole German people. The Berchtesgaden agreement, had it been loyally carried out on the Austrian side in the spirit of the conversation of February 12th, would in fact have guaranteed such a development.

Instead of this, the former Austrian Federal Chancellor, on the evening of March 9th, announced the surprising decision, taken on his own sole authority, to hold within a period of a few days a plebiscite, which having regard to the surrounding circumstances and in particular the detailed plans for the carrying out of the plebiscite, was intended to have, as it could only have, as its purpose the political repression of the overwhelming majority of the population of Austria. This proceeding, standing as it did in flagrant contradiction to the Berchtesgaden agreement, led as might have been foreseen to an extremely critical development of the internal situation in Austria. It was only natural that those members of the Austrian Government who had taken no part in the decision to hold a plebiscite should raise the strongest protest against it. In consequence there ensued a Cabinet crisis in Vienna, which in the course of the 11th of March led to the resignation of the former Federal Chancellor and the formation of a new Government. It is not true that forcible pressure on the course of these developments was exercised by the Reich. In particular the statement subsequently spread by the former Federal Chancellor—to the effect that the German Government had delivered an ultimatum with a time-limit to the Federal President, in accordance with which he was to appoint as Federal Chancellor one of certain proposed candidates and construct the Government in conformity with the proposals of the German Government failing which the entry of German troops into Austria would have to be contemplated—is pure imagination. As a matter of fact the question of the despatch of military and police forces from the Reich was first raised by the fact that the newly formed Austrian Government addressed to the Government of the Reich, in a telegram which has already been published in the press, an urgent request that, for the re-establishment of peace and order and for the prevention of bloodshed, German troops should be despatched as soon as possible. Faced with the directly threatening danger of a bloody civil war in Austria, the Government of the Reich decided to meet the appeal then addressed to it.

Such being the case it is completely inconceivable that the conduct of the German Government, as is stated in your letter, could lead to unforeseeable consequences. A general review of the political situation is given in the Proclamation which the Chancellor of the German Reich addressed at noon today to the German people. In this situation dangerous consequences could



only come into play if an attempt should be made by any third party, in contradiction to the peaceful intentions and legitimate aims of the Reich, to exercise on the development of the situation in Austria an influence inconsistent with the right of the German people to self-determination.

Accept etc.,

(Signed) FREIHERR VON NEURATH<sup>1</sup>

The 'Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau' this evening issued a short statement to the effect that the German Government had rejected as inadmissible the protests made by the British and French Ambassadors with reference to news reaching them from Vienna of compulsion exercised by the Reich Government upon the development of events.

#### No. 57

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 68 Telegraphic [R 2458/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938, 8.45 p.m.*

We shall almost certainly be asked whether in present circumstances we are taking any steps to employ machinery of League of Nations.

In the view of His Majesty's Government, such procedure would be of no practical advantage in redressing present situation, and we fear that only result would be to expose League to open humiliation. Moreover to place League in this position now must inevitably prejudice its eventual reconstitution.

Please inform French Government that this is the feeling of His Majesty's Government. We should be glad to know their views.

#### No. 58

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 83 Telegraphic [R 2391/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938, 10.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 97 and 98.<sup>1</sup>

I note that General Göring has assured you that troops will be withdrawn as soon as the situation is stable and that after their withdrawal free elections will be held without any intimidation whatever. Please inform German Government that His Majesty's Government have taken note of these undertakings.

Repeated to Vienna, Rome, Paris, Prague and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 46 and 48.

No. 59

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 84 Telegraphic [R 2423/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 101.<sup>1</sup>

I agree that nothing short of direct threat of force would have altered course of events.

I have only been anxious (see my telegram No. 82)<sup>2</sup> that the Germans should not be able to complain that our attitude was not made sufficiently clear to them.

Language described in second paragraph of your telegram is quite right and corresponds with what we have told Herr von Ribbentrop here.

<sup>1</sup> No. 49.

<sup>2</sup> No. 54.

No. 60

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*

*No. 98 Telegraphic [R 2434/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 138.<sup>1</sup>

We must assume that Count Ciano's indication of Signor Mussolini's attitude is correct and your conversation with Count Ciano makes Italian position clear enough. In the circumstances there would be no object in your pressing for an interview with Signor Mussolini.

<sup>1</sup> No. 53.

No. 61

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 93 [R 2432/162/12]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938*

Sir,

The Czechoslovak Minister called to see me this afternoon and asked me whether I could tell him anything of the conversations which we had had with Herr von Ribbentrop or what action we had taken at Berlin that it would be of value to his Government to know. He reported the assurances that had been given by General Göring to the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, recorded in your telegram No. 23,<sup>1</sup> and said that similar assurances had been

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of March 12 Mr. Newton reported that the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin had had two conversations with Field-Marshal Göring on the preceding evening: 'In the first conversation Field-Marshal Göring expressed appreciation of the calm attitude maintained in Czechoslovakia and of the fact that the Government had not mobilized. The events in Austria were "a family affair". "We have", he said, "nothing against Czechoslovakia and we wish to continue our present policy in so far as our mutual

given, I think last night, by the German Minister in Prague to the Czechoslovak Government.<sup>2</sup> He had been in communication with Dr. Benes, who said that the country was quiet, and that he personally was not apprehensive of any early trouble. His Excellency fully realised the difficulty of this country undertaking any direct commitments of the nature sometimes suggested in regard to Czechoslovakia, and said that he suffered much from the embarrassments of would-be friends, mainly of the Liberal persuasion, whose advances he spent much energy in evading. He had, for example, been a good deal disturbed by a proposal that, after some demonstration under the auspices of Lord Cecil in Trafalgar Square to-morrow, a sympathetic demonstration should take place outside his house in Grosvenor Place. He had explained to Lord Cecil that the only effect of this would be to put the German Government in a position to say that the Czechoslovak Minister in London was encouraging support by those whom the Germans would label Bolsheviks, and that this would do more harm than good. He had succeeded in inducing Lord Cecil to abandon this part of the programme, and the Minister himself had decided to leave London for the week-end in order to be out of the way.

2. We had some discussion of the alleged German grievances which, he said, could be in a fair way to a solution if the Czechoslovak Government were left alone and if the alleged grievances were all that there was of substance to cause trouble between the two countries. In reply to a question of mine, the Minister said that the general view in Czechoslovakia was that, if trouble came, it would come by the familiar way of organised disturbances, in the course of which German troops might be sent for, according to the Austrian technique, to protect the German victims of Czechoslovak oppression.

3. After some further conversation, his Excellency made the tentative suggestion that it might be of great value if the assurances referred to as having been given in Berlin and Prague were formally communicated to us and if we, on that information being conveyed to us, were able to notify the German Government that we were pleased to take note of it.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

relations are concerned." The second conversation took place in the presence of the Hungarian Minister. Field-Marshal Göring repeated the assurance which he had already given and added, "I can give you the word of the Head of the State and I can give you an entirely official declaration because the Führer has empowered me to conduct the highest affairs of State. He will withdraw for a short time (Er wird sich auf kurze Zeit zurückziehen)."

<sup>2</sup> In a later telegram (No. 25) of March 12, Mr. Newton reported that Field-Marshal Göring had telephoned during the morning to the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin to inform him that the German troops had orders to keep 15 km. from the Czechoslovak frontiers.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 12, 1938*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called to see me this afternoon and said that he hoped that M. Blum would shortly succeed in forming a Government and that in this Government M. Delbos would continue to be responsible for foreign affairs.

2. Recent events, his Excellency continued, in Austria were typical of German method and his Government thought that it was essential that we also should think out our method in advance of any further action by the German Government. It was, therefore, in his judgment essential that the French Government and His Majesty's Government should have consultation with one another upon the dangerous issues that might at any time confront us with the necessity of immediate decision. There was, moreover, great advantage in a policy of common action, if it were decided, being known in advance. He accordingly hoped that His Majesty's Government would be disposed to take this view and be prepared to take steps for full examination of the situation with the French Government.

3. I told the Ambassador that I had already had the points he mentioned much in mind and had drawn the attention of my colleagues this morning to their importance. I recognised with him the urgency of our two Governments placing themselves in close consultation and, although I had as yet not discussed the question with the Prime Minister, I had myself had in mind the possible desirability of suggesting a meeting with French Ministers.

4. On the particular problem that was in his thought, I, of course, appreciated the force of his argument as to the deterrent value, in certain eventualities, of a publicly declared intention of action in advance, but on the other hand he would know without my telling him the difficulties that stood in the way of this country undertaking prior commitments. His Excellency said he appreciated our position to the full. I then showed him the telegram No. 23<sup>1</sup> that we had had from Mr. Newton at Prague, reporting the assurances given by General Göring to the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, which the Ambassador said were all to the good as far as they went, but German assurances were of uncertain value.

5. We then had some discussion about the alleged grievances of the Sudetendeutschen, in the course of which his Excellency expressed the opinion that the main point of substance in these was the recruitment of Germans to official posts, but, in his view, the grievances were only a small part of, and an excuse for, what he suspected to be German policy. I concluded this part of our conversation by saying that I would discuss with the Prime Minister and my colleagues the question of what might be the most

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 61, note 1.

appropriate form for mutual consultation between our two Governments which we both desired.

6. As his Excellency was leaving, I asked him whether he could tell me as to what, in fact, would be the French conception of rendering assistance to Czechoslovakia in the event of German action making it necessary for the French Government to implement their commitments. It always seemed to me that with the developments that had taken place and were taking place on the western frontier of Germany it would, in fact, be much more difficult than formerly for the French to render direct assistance in that quarter. There remained, of course, the air, but this, the Ambassador said, would not be, in his view, a very promising line alone. For the rest he had no short answer, and contented himself with saying that it would be one of the matters that might usefully be discussed between our two Governments.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 63

*The Czechoslovak Minister in London to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received March 12)  
[R 2524/162/12]

LONDON, March 12, 1938

My Lord,

I have reported to my Government the interview which you were good enough to grant me to-day.

I have in consequence been instructed by my Government to bring to the official knowledge of His Majesty's Government the following facts: Yesterday evening (the 11th March) Field-Marshal Göring made two separate statements to M. Mastny, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, assuring him that the developments in Austria will in no way have any detrimental influence on the relations between the German Reich and Czechoslovakia, and emphasising the continued earnest endeavour on the part of Germany to improve those mutual relations.

In the first statement the field-marshal used the expression: 'Ich gebe Ihnen mein Ehrenwort.'<sup>1</sup>

In the second statement Field-Marshal Göring asserted that, having given his own word previously, he was now able to give the word of the Head of the State, who had authorised him to take over temporarily his official duties. He then repeated the above assurances.

To-day (the 12th March) Field-Marshal Göring asked M. Mastny to call on him, repeated yesterday's assurances and added that the German troops, marching into Austria, have strictest orders to keep at least 15 kilom. from the Czechoslovak frontier; at the same time he expressed the hope that no mobilisation of the Czechoslovak army would take place.

<sup>1</sup> 'I give you my word of honour.'



M. Mastny was in a position to give him definite and binding assurances on this subject, and to-day spoke with Baron von Neurath, who, among other things, assured him on behalf of Herr Hitler that Germany still considers herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Convention concluded at Locarno in October 1925.<sup>2</sup>

M. Mastny also saw to-day Herr von Mackensen, who assured him that the clarification of the Austrian situation will tend to improve German-Czechoslovak relations.

The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic wish to assure His Majesty's Government that they are animated by the earnest and ardent desire to live in the best possible neighbourly relations with the German Reich. They cannot, however, fail to view with great apprehension the sequel of events in Austria between the date of the bilateral agreement between Germany and Austria (11th July, 1936), and yesterday (11th March, 1938).

I have, &c.

JAN MASARYK

<sup>2</sup> For the text of this Treaty see Final Protocol of the Locarno Conference, 1925, Annex E. (Cmd. 2525 of 1925).

#### No. 64

*Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 140 Telegraphic [R 2505/137/3]*

ROME, March 12, 1938, 11.50 p.m.

At the Ministry of Popular Culture this morning the following line was taken in private conversation.

Decision of Dr. Schuschnigg to hold plebiscite on Sunday was probably unwise. What had happened in Austria had not weakened Rome-Berlin axis. The two kindred régimes Fascism and National Socialism would continue to march side by side. Italian Government was in touch with Berlin and it was hoped that all would go well.

There was no possibility of joint action with France and England in regard to Austrian situation. That would be incompatible with Rome-Berlin axis.

In addition to this information spokesman called journalists' attention to the two articles written by Gayda in 'Giornale d'Italia' on April 24th and 25th last year after Mussolini-Schuschnigg meeting in Venice when Gayda caused suspicion by announcing that Austrian Nazis would shortly be called on to divide responsibility of [*sic* ?with] Patriotic Front, a first step towards direct participation in the Government (April 24) and when these words were seized upon by foreign press said (April 25) that he was referring to probabilities that had nothing to do with Venice meeting but were inherent in the internal situation in Austria, into problems of which Italy had no intention of entering.

In referring to these articles intention seems to have been to suggest that



Dr. Schuschnigg had delayed in carrying out programme which was to have followed agreement of July 1936 and that in any case Italy would not interfere in what must be regarded as an internal question.

Repeated to Berlin and Vienna.

#### No. 65

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 10.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 93 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2429/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 13, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 84<sup>1</sup> does less [? than] justice to Dr. Schuschnigg. Plebiscite was a very dangerous card to play without previous assurance of Italy's support, but he played it in the hope of saving the independence of Austria and not his own position for which he has never cared. He considered rightly or wrongly that plebiscite must be taken at once to meet threat against Austrian independence which his Minister of the Interior was undermining under German guidance. His tactics may have been mistaken but his motives have throughout been totally un-selfseeking and patriotic.

<sup>1</sup> No. 14.

#### No. 66

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 12.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 96 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2439/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 13, 1938

In addition to all Public Offices in Vienna all Provincial Governments were taken over yesterday without, so far as I can ascertain, any incident whatever. It may be taken as certain that whole administration of the country has been taken over by the new régime. German and Austrian flags fly everywhere and public buildings display Austrian red and white colours combined with Swastika.

There was of course never any question of resistance but military and air demonstrations of yesterday have had the desired effect and even population of Vienna which seemed apathetic and depressed yesterday morning had reached high eminence of enthusiasm by the evening. There can be no doubt that plebiscite will be complete triumph for Hitler, as *fait accompli* is accepted by all.

Nazification of Austria is proceeding very rapidly. Every trace of Dr. Schuschnigg's régime is being removed and one has the impression that Austria has become German in a single night at any rate outwardly. I gather that ultimate form of union between the two States has not yet been decided.

No. 67

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 1.40 p.m.)*

*No. 106 Telegraphic: [? by telephone] [R 2452/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 13, 1938

Your telegram No. 83.<sup>1</sup>

I have this morning addressed a letter to Field-Marshal Göring, who in Hitler's temporary absence has been appointed his deputy to carry on the Government, in the sense of your instructions.

<sup>1</sup> No. 58.

No. 68

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received March 13, 1.45 p.m.)*

*No. 105 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2462/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 13, 1938

Your telegram No. 82.<sup>1</sup>

I much regret you should feel my remarks to Field-Marshal Göring about Dr. Schuschnigg may have diminished the force of protest which I made to him.

My telegram No. 97<sup>2</sup> was somewhat hurriedly drafted in the middle of the night and I fear did not accurately reproduce my long passage of arms with Field-Marshal Göring. I spoke to him very strongly in the sense of your language to Herr von Ribbentrop as to Chancellor's constitutional right to hold a plebiscite. Field-Marshal Göring repeatedly retorted that it was all Dr. Schuschnigg's fault for deciding to hold this sudden plebiscite and it was only at the end of the conversation that I said that even if Dr. Schuschnigg had been ill-advised this did not justify Germany's tyranny against a small nation. I did not actually use the words 'precipitate folly'. I admit however that when it was clear that protest would not prevent German action I was endeavouring in making this remark to defend the interests of Austria as distinct from Dr. Schuschnigg's, my point being that even if Dr. Schuschnigg had been indiscreet nothing could condone Germany's resort to violence.

I can only assure you that I did not at all derive impression that Field-Marshal Göring himself felt force of our protest had been diminished by what I said. On the other hand I did realise that its force was greatly lessened in German eyes here by Dr. Schuschnigg's own action in giving impression by his hasty appeal to plebiscite that he was going back on Berchtesgaden agreement. There are many Germans who regret what has happened and are ashamed of the methods employed by Herr Hitler but even the most moderate have regarded Dr. Schuschnigg's action as their justification.

I shall however bear what you say in mind and much regret if harm was done.

<sup>1</sup> No. 54.

<sup>2</sup> No. 46.

No. 69

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Palairet (Vienna)*

*No. 39 Telegraphic [R 2368/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 13, 1938, 3.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 71<sup>1</sup> and Berlin telegram No. 97.<sup>2</sup>

For purposes of statement in Parliament tomorrow I am anxious for confirmation of the fact that the ultimatum referred to in your telegram No. 71 *actually originated in and was brought from Germany*. German Government deny this and denial is reaffirmed in Baron von Neurath's letter<sup>3</sup> reported in Berlin telegram No. 104, which has been repeated to you.

<sup>1</sup> No. 30.

<sup>2</sup> No. 46.

<sup>3</sup> No. 56.

No. 70

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 4.0 p.m.)*

*No. 98 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2441/137/3]*

VIENNA, *March 13, 1938*

You will perhaps desire my observations on Berlin telegram No. 104<sup>1</sup> just telephoned to me.

Paragraph 1. German Government have no doubt claimed exclusive interest in German-Austrian relations but His Majesty's Government have never admitted and have indeed contested that claim.

Paragraph 4. Even if His Majesty's Government admitted proposed plebiscite to have been objectionable (which they have not done), Dr. Schuschnigg offered to abandon it but was told that this was not enough and that he must resign. I submit we should refuse to accept fiction that Austrian Minister of the Interior was not acting under German orders. German denial of ultimatum to Federal President is contradicted by Federal President himself (see my telegram No. 77)<sup>2</sup> and by Dr. Schuschnigg (see my telegram No. 74).<sup>3</sup> It is true that despatch of military force from Germany was first requested by new Chancellor but mobilisation had been proceeding in Bavaria since the early morning.

<sup>1</sup> No. 56.

<sup>2</sup> No. 38.

<sup>3</sup> No. 36.

No. 71

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*(Received March 13, 6.0 p.m.)*

*No. 87 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2524/162/12]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 13, 1938*

The Czechoslovak Minister here has informed us officially that on March 11 Field-Marshal Göring made two separate statements to the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin assuring him that developments in Austria would have

no detrimental influence on the relations between the German Reich and Czechoslovakia and emphasising the continued earnest endeavour on the part of Germany to improve those mutual relations.

In the first statement the Field-Marshal used the expression 'I give you my word of honour'. In the second statement the Field-Marshal asserted that, having given his own word previously, he was now able to give the word of the Head of the State. He then repeated the above assurances.

On March 12 Field-Marshal Göring asked the Czechoslovak Minister to call on him and repeated the assurances given the day before, and added that the German troops marching into Austria had the strictest orders to keep at least 15 km. from the Czechoslovak frontier; at the same time he expressed the hope that no mobilisation of the Czechoslovak army would take place.

The Czechoslovak Minister gave assurances on this subject, and the same day spoke with Baron von Neurath, who, *inter alia*, assured him on behalf of Herr Hitler that Germany considered herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Convention of October 1925. M. Mastny also saw on March 12 Herr von Mackensen, who assured him that the clarification of the Austrian situation would tend to improve German-Czechoslovak relations.

You should inform the German Government that these undertakings have been communicated to us by the Czechoslovak Government and that His Majesty's Government are glad to take note of these repeated and solemn assurances.

You should then enquire whether the German Government will permit us to make public these assurances or their general sense in the statement to be made on the situation in Parliament tomorrow, pointing out that their publication will necessarily go some way towards reassuring public opinion.

We have already obtained permission from the Czechoslovak Government. Repeated to Prague and Paris.

## No. 72

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 7.30 p.m.)  
No. 80 Telegraphic [R 2459/137/3]*

PARIS, March 13, 1938, 6.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 68.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday asked my personal opinion as to advisability of bringing Austrian question before League and I replied practically in same terms as your telegram under reference.

I saw M. Delbos this afternoon and repeated to him substance of your telegram. He agrees personally but points out that his successor (M. Paul-Boncour) will take over Ministry of Foreign Affairs from him tonight or tomorrow morning.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 57.

<sup>2</sup> A new French Government took office on March 13, with M. Blum as President of the Council.

I have spoken to Political Director who has prepared a memorandum advising against going before League. If new Minister takes a different view (which is possible in view of his ultra pro-League feelings) M. Massigli has promised to tell me at once.

No. 73

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 88 Telegraphic [R 2461/137/3]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 13, 1938, 6.40 p.m.*

Prime Minister and I propose to read out tomorrow in both Houses of Parliament, the German Government's reply to my protest as given in your telegram No. 104.<sup>1</sup>

You should inform the German Government.

<sup>1</sup> No. 56.

No. 74

*Mr. Palairot (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 7.15 p.m.)*

*No. 106 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2445/137/3]*

VIENNA, *March 13, 1938*

Rome telegram No. 144.<sup>1</sup>

Treatment of Jews and anti-Nazis already beginning here is sufficient comment on Herr Hitler's hypocritical claim that he wished to assure complete equality of all before the law in Austria and prevent ill-treatment of majority by minority.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Lord Perth summarized a letter from Herr Hitler to Signor Mussolini which was published in the Italian press on March 13. The letter was a defence of Herr Hitler's action with regard to Austria.

No. 75

*Mr. Palairot (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 13, 8.20 p.m.)*

*No. 109 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2448/137/3]*

VIENNA, *March 13, 1938*

It has just been announced on the wireless that a law has been passed by the Austrian Government, coming into force on publication, according to which (1) Austria is now a province (Land) of the German Reich and this comes into force at once. (2) A free and secret plebiscite for all over twenty on the question of reunion with Germany will be held in Austria on April 10. (3) At the plebiscite a simple majority will be decisive.

Foreign correspondents were officially informed of above at 8 p.m.

I am repeating by telephone to Berlin, Prague, Budapest and Rome.

Please repeat to Paris.

No. 76

*Mr. Palairet (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 14, 8.50 a.m.)*  
*No. 111 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2450/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 14, 1938

It is impossible to deny enthusiasm with which both the new régime and last night's announcement of incorporation in the Reich have been received here. Herr Hitler is certainly justified in claiming that his action has been welcomed by Austrian population. I am telephoning this appreciation in view of the Prime Minister's statement to-day.

Press announces this morning that Herr Hitler went at 10 a.m. yesterday to Leonding near Linz where he laid a wreath on the grave of his parents. He is to proceed to Salzburg and Styria, possibly also Carinthia, and will probably arrive in Vienna this afternoon.

It was announced yesterday by Herr Hitler that the Austrian Army is now a part of the strength of the German Army.

No. 77

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received March 14, 11.10 a.m.)*  
*No. 108 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2503/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 14, 1938

Field-Marshal Göring gave me again this morning most solemn assurance that plebiscite to be held on April 10 will be completely free, secret and impartial and that it was open to the whole world to assist thereat and judge for itself. If, he said, fifty-one per cent. voted against the new law for incorporation of Austria as German 'Land' in German Reich, that law would cease to be valid.

These are of course mere words since majority in favour is certain. Twenty-five per cent. of the nation may possibly be definitely opposed to incorporation and twenty-five per cent. equally definitely in favour thereof. Remaining fifty per cent. will surely vote for the winning side which in this case is bound to be Germany.

It may therefore be taken for granted that at least seventy-five per cent. will vote for the new law and I think German Government count on eighty per cent.

Repeated to Vienna.



*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received March 14, 3.5 p.m.)*

*No. 111 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2525/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 14, 1938

When I saw Baron von Neurath this morning I referred to the assurance given me by Field-Marshal Göring that German troops would be withdrawn as soon as the position was stable. I had I said just learnt that the Austrian military force was being incorporated in German Army and I trusted that this would not serve as an excuse to go back on that assurance. Baron von Neurath replied that it would be kept and that he had discussed this point himself yesterday with General Keitel and the Commander-in-Chief.

Nevertheless I am not confident that he will be right as it is clear that events are moving faster than he or others anticipated, a fact which Baron von Neurath himself deplored, I think quite honestly. Danger is that German secret state police will take control and together with Austrian extremists indulge in a riot of excesses. I drew Baron von Neurath's very serious attention to this on the grounds that the situation was bad enough without aggravating it by persecution. Baron von Neurath admitted the danger particularly in view of personalities of some of the S.S. now in Austria whom he said he thoroughly distrusted. He undertook however to use all his influence in the sense of moderation but I fear that it will be slight. Apart from Dr. Schuschnigg and his sympathisers I made special reference to the Jews.

## No. 79

*Statement by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on March 14<sup>1</sup>*

The main sequence of events of the last few days will be familiar to honourable Members, but no doubt the House will desire that I should make a statement on the subject. The result of the meeting at Berchtesgaden on the 12th February between the German and Austrian Chancellors was stated by the former to be an extension of the framework of the July 1936 agreement. Honourable and right honourable Gentlemen will recollect that that agreement provided, among other things, for the recognition of the independence of Austria by Germany and the recognition by Austria of the fact that she was a German State. Therefore, whatever the results of the Berchtesgaden meeting were, it is clear that the agreement reached was on the basis of the independence of Austria.

On Wednesday of last week Herr von Schuschnigg decided that the best way to put an end to the uncertainties of the internal situation in his country was to hold a plebiscite under which the people could decide the future of their country. Provision for that plebiscite is made in the Austrian Constitution of 1934. This decision on the part of the Austrian Chancellor was

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., Vol. 333, cols. 45-52.

unwelcome to the German Government, as it was also unwelcome to the Austrian National Socialists themselves. Matters appear to have come to a head on the morning of the 11th March, when Herr von Seyss-Inquart, who had been appointed Minister of the Interior as a result of the Berchtesgaden meeting, together with his colleague, Dr. Glaise-Horstenau, presented an ultimatum to the Chancellor. They demanded the abandonment of the plebiscite, and threatened that if this was refused the Nazis would abstain from voting, and could not be restrained from causing serious disturbances during the poll. The two Ministers also demanded changes in the provincial Governments and other bodies.

They required an answer from the Chancellor, so I am informed, before 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The Chancellor declined to accept this ultimatum, but offered a compromise under which a second plebiscite should be held later, with regular voting lists. In the meantime, he said, he would be prepared to make it clear that voters might vote for his policy but against him personally, in order to prove that the plebiscite was not a personal question of his remaining in office. Later that day, feeling himself to be under threat of civil war and a possible military invasion, the Chancellor gave way to the two Ministers, and agreed to cancel the plebiscite on condition that the tranquillity of the country was not disturbed by the Nazis. There seems to be little doubt that this offer was referred to Germany. In any event, the reply which the Ministers returned was that this offer was insufficient and that Herr Schuschnigg must resign in order to be replaced by Herr Seyss-Inquart. It appears that the Austrian Chancellor was given until 4.30 p.m. Greenwich time, in which to reply, and was informed that, if his reply was not satisfactory, German troops would be ordered to move at 5 o'clock. This fact seems to show that Germany was behind the ultimatum.

Later in the day a fresh ultimatum was delivered, which appears to have been brought from Germany by aeroplane. The demands made were the resignation of the Chancellor and his replacement by the Minister of the Interior, a new Cabinet, of which two-thirds were to be National Socialists, the Austrian Legion to be readmitted to the country and given the duty of keeping order in Vienna, and the total readmission of the Nazi party. A reply was required before 6.30 p.m., Greenwich time. To these demands the Austrian Chancellor announced, a little later on the wireless, that he had, in view of the German threatened invasion, yielded, in order to avoid the shedding of German blood. He said that he wished the world to know that the President and he had yielded to force, and that Austrian troops had been instructed to oppose no resistance to German troops if and when the latter crossed the frontier. The subsequent entry of German troops into Austria and the visit of the German Chancellor to Linz will be known to hon. Members.

His Majesty's Government have throughout been in the closest touch with the situation. The Foreign Secretary saw the German Foreign Minister on the 10th March, and addressed to him a grave warning on the Austrian situation and upon what appeared to be the policy of the German Government in regard to it. In particular, Lord Halifax told him that His Majesty's Govern-

ment attached the greatest importance to all measures being taken to ensure that the plebiscite was carried out without interference or intimidation. Late on the 11th March our Ambassador in Berlin registered a protest in strong terms with the German Government against such use of coercion, backed by force, against an independent State in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence. Such action, Sir Neville Henderson pointed out, was bound to produce the gravest reactions, of which it would be impossible to foretell the issue. Earlier that day I made earnest representations in the same sense to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, with whom my Noble Friend also had two further conversations on that day. To these protests the German Government replied in a letter addressed to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin by Baron von Neurath. I think I should read the terms of that communication in full. They are as follows— . . .<sup>2</sup>

That concludes the letter by Baron von Neurath in reply to the protest of the British Government.

I do not wish to enter into any long argument about the historical narrative of events as described by Baron von Neurath, but I am bound at once to refute his statement to the effect that His Majesty's Government were not within their rights in interesting themselves in the independence of Austria, and that, as in the opinion of the German Government relations between Austria and Germany are a purely internal affair, His Majesty's Government, as a third party, has no concern in them. The interest of His Majesty's Government in this question cannot, however, on any tenable ground, be denied.

In the first place, Great Britain and Austria are both members of the League, and both were signatories, as was also the German Government, of treaties which provided that the independence of Austria was inalienable except with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. Quite apart from this, His Majesty's Government are, and always must be, interested in developments in Central Europe, particularly events such as those which have just taken place, if only for the reason, as I stated in the House only a fortnight ago, that the object of all their policy has been to assist in the establishment of a sense of greater security and confidence in Europe, and that the object, as I said then, must inevitably be helped or hindered by events in Central Europe. Throughout these events His Majesty's Government have remained in the closest touch with the French Government who, I understand, also entered a strong protest in Berlin on similar lines to that lodged by His Majesty's Government. It seems to us that the methods adopted throughout these events call for the severest condemnation and have administered a profound shock to all who are interested in the preservation of European peace. It follows that what has passed cannot fail to have prejudiced the hope of His Majesty's Government of removing misunderstandings between nations and promoting international co-operation.

It might seem unnecessary to refute rumours that His Majesty's Govern-

<sup>2</sup> For the text of Baron von Neurath's letter, see No. 56.

ment had given consent if not encouragement to the idea of the absorption of Austria by Germany, were there not evidence that these are being sedulously put about in many quarters. There is, of course, no foundation whatever for any of these rumours. The statement which I had already made shows clearly His Majesty's Government emphatically disapprove, as they have always disapproved, actions such as those of which Austria has been made the scene.

The attitude of Czechoslovakia to these events is a matter of general interest and in this connexion I can give the House the following information. The Czech Government have officially informed His Majesty's Government that though it is their earnest desire to live on the best possible neighbourly relations with the German Reich they have followed with the greatest attention the development of events in Austria between the date of the Austro-German Agreement of July 1936 up to the present day. I am informed that Field-Marshal Göring on the 11th March gave a general assurance to the Czech Minister in Berlin—an assurance which he expressly renewed later on behalf of Herr Hitler—that it would be earnest endeavour of the German Government to improve German-Czech relations. In particular, on the 12th March, Field-Marshal Göring informed the Czech Minister that German troops marching into Austria had received the strictest orders to keep at least 15 kilom. from the Czech frontier. On the same day the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin was assured by Baron von Neurath that Germany considered herself bound by the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Convention of October 1925.

The House may desire me to repeat what our position in regard to Austria was. We were under no commitment to take action *vis-à-vis* Austria, but we were pledged to consultation with the French and Italian Governments in the event of action being taken which affected Austrian independence and integrity, for which provision was made by the relevant articles of the peace treaties. This pledge arises from agreements reached between the French, Italian and United Kingdom Governments first in February 1934, then in September of the same year and finally at the Stresa Conference in April 1935, in which the position was reaffirmed, to consult together in any measures to be taken in the case of threats to the integrity and independence of Austria. We have fully discharged the pledge of consultation with both the French Government and the Italian Government, to whom we made an immediate approach when Austrian independence seemed to be threatened by recent events. As a result of the consultation with the French Government His Majesty's Government and the French Government addressed similar protests to the German Government on the action that had been taken. From the Italian Government we received no full exposition of their views, but their attitude has been defined with great precision in the statement issued on behalf of the Italian Government, which appears in the press to-day. It is quite untrue to suggest that we have ever given Germany our assent or our encouragement to the effective absorption of Austria into the German Reich. We had, indeed, never refused to recognise the special interest that Germany had in the development of relations between Austria and herself,

having regard to the close affinities existing between the two countries. But on every occasion on which any representative of His Majesty's Government has had opportunities to discuss these matters with representatives of the German Government it has always been made plain that His Majesty's Government would strongly disapprove of the application to the solution of these problems of violent methods. It must have, as I have constantly pointed out to the House, a damaging influence upon general confidence in Europe. In appraising recent events it is necessary to face facts, however we may judge them, however we may anticipate that they will react upon the international position as it exists to-day. The hard fact is—and of its truth every hon. Member can judge for himself—that nothing could have arrested this action by Germany unless we and others with us had been prepared to use force to prevent it.

I imagine that according to the temperament of the individual the events which are in our minds to-day will be the cause of regret, of sorrow, perhaps of indignation. They cannot be regarded by His Majesty's Government with indifference or equanimity. They are bound to have effects which cannot yet be measured. The immediate result must be to intensify the sense of uncertainty and insecurity in Europe. Unfortunately, while the policy of appeasement would lead to a relaxation of the economic pressure under which many countries are suffering to-day, what has just occurred must inevitably retard economic recovery and, indeed, increased care will be required to ensure that marked deterioration does not set in.

This is not a moment for hasty decisions or for careless words. We must consider the new situation quickly, but with cool judgment. I am confident that we shall be supported in asking that no one, whatever his preconceived notions may be, will regard himself as excluded from any extension of the national effort which may be called for. As regards our defence programmes, we have always made it clear that they were flexible and that they would have to be reviewed from time to time in the light of any development in the international situation. It would be idle to pretend that recent events do not constitute a change of the kind that we had in mind. Accordingly we have decided to make a fresh review, and in due course we shall announce what further steps we may think it necessary to take.

#### No. 80

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received March 15, 12.15 p.m.)

*No. 115 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2608/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 15, 1938

The Chancellor's entry into Vienna naturally dwarfs all other news this morning, but the Prime Minister's speech is fully reported, only the condemnatory passages being omitted or slurred.



Comment is for the most part moderate, obviously with a view to a recent criticism of the British press.

The 'Völkischer Beobachter' says that the statement must be disappointing for certain people in Paris who had founded great hopes on it with regard to the future attitude of the Western Powers to Central Europe. The intimations of further rearmament are not surprising to those who remember the methods used to make the original measures acceptable. Exception is taken to Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion that the Nazis feared a plebiscite—they only feared a dishonest Schuschnigg plebiscite and now there will be an honest one on April 10—and to his statement that the German action has increased the feeling of uncertainty in Europe. What gives great satisfaction is his affirmation that nothing but force could have prevented the unification of Germany and Austria—for this is how the remark in question is interpreted.

The 'Börsen Zeitung's' remarks are on very similar lines. As for Germany fearing a plebiscite, Mr. Chamberlain should have listened to the rejoicings on the Vienna wireless yesterday to learn how the Austrians really feel. As regards the feeling of uncertainty in Europe, that was the result of the unnatural peace treaties and peace has followed where they have been set aside. So it will be [with] the return of Austria to the Reich.

Like the 'Völkischer Beobachter' the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' suggests that the Prime Minister exploited the occasion for armaments propaganda. The British character it adds is too cold to appreciate the national fervour behind the events in Austria.

The 'Essener National Zeitung' alone departs somewhat from the general attitude of restraint. Its remarks are on the same lines but it accuses the Prime Minister of being actuated by consideration of parliamentary tactics. With regard to his reference to the peace treaties it says 'least of all that the English Prime Minister said will Germany worry about the quotations from the treaty clauses. We are today further than ever before from Versailles, Geneva and St. Germain and can only smile, now that Austria is part of Germany, at Mr. Chamberlain's reminder that Austria was a member of the League and had certain obligations. That Austria, as Mr. Chamberlain will have recognised, no longer exists. God knows it was foolish and superfluous to speak of it. . . .

'Anyway, all future attempts at intervention in a purely internal German affair which England may attempt out of loyalty to the League will meet with the strongest resistance from the Reich and will certainly be stigmatised as blind and foolish by history. Three weeks ago, on the occasion of the change at the Foreign Office the English Prime Minister announced a realist policy and repeatedly defended a common sense attitude. Germany wonders whether after Monday's interlude he will return thereto.'



No. 81

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 15, 8.15 p.m.)  
No. 84 Telegraphic [R 2674/162/12]*

PARIS, March 15, 1938, 6.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 77.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me meeting of French National Defence Committee, mentioned in my immediately preceding telegram,<sup>2</sup> was originally summoned only in order to supply answer to your question to French Ambassador as to French conception of rendering assistance to Czechoslovakia.

M. Paul-Boncour urged that His Majesty's Government should declare publicly that, if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia and France went to latter's assistance, Great Britain would stand by France.

I gave my personal opinion that the Germans were unlikely, in view of French and Russian alliances with Czechoslovakia, to proceed with the same simplicity and brutality as with defenceless Austria.

I thought it more probable that German absorption of Czechoslovakia might well come about by terribly severe economic pressure, forcing the Czechoslovakians themselves to ask for some Customs Union with Germany.

In any case, again speaking personally, I thought the French should not press His Majesty's Government unduly to make a declaration that they could not make in advance. Controversy on the subject might arise in Great Britain and this would be unfortunate, and would only give satisfaction to the Germans.

I do not pretend to have convinced M. Paul-Boncour.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of March 12 summarised the conversation between Lord Halifax and the French Ambassador reported in No. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of March 15 Sir E. Phipps reported a conversation with M. Paul-Boncour with regard to the gravity of the situation in Spain. M. Paul-Boncour said that the French Committee of National Defence was meeting later in the afternoon to consider this situation. He also suggested that His Majesty's Government should take into consideration the possibility of mediation.

No. 82

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 525 [R 2610/162/12]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 15, 1938

Sir,

The French Ambassador called at the Foreign Office on March 14th and left the attached note about Czechoslovakia. He enquired whether the statement which was to be made in Parliament on that date would deal with the future policy of His Majesty's Government as regards Austria, and more particularly as regards Czechoslovakia. M. Corbin was informed that the

statement was still under discussion but that it would probably deal with past events and the present position rather than with future policy. As regards Czechoslovakia, it was understood that the Prime Minister would read out and take note of the assurances which had been recently given to the Czechoslovak Government by Field-Marshal Göring and Freiherr von Neurath. But beyond that it was doubtful whether anything further would be said as regards the problem of Czechoslovakia.

2. M. Corbin then said that the French Government were very anxious as to what might happen between Germany and Czechoslovakia in the immediate future. In spite of Field-Marshal Göring's and Freiherr von Neurath's assurances an incident might at any moment be provoked, either on the frontier or by the Sudetendeutschen in the country, which might precipitate an immediate crisis.

3. The new French Foreign Minister was going to repeat in the Chamber M. Delbos' recent statement, to the effect that France was resolved to carry out her treaty obligations if Czechoslovakia were attacked. The French Government feared, however, that if the statements of His Majesty's Government on the present crisis contained no indication of the intentions of His Majesty's Government in the event of such an attack, their silence might be interpreted, not merely in Germany but throughout Europe, as implying that they were disinterested and were prepared to acquiesce in whatever happened. This might have disastrous results, and the French Government sincerely hoped that His Majesty's Government would carefully weigh this very important consideration when they further examined the problem of Czechoslovakia.

I am, etc.

HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN No. 82

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE A LONDRES, *le 13 mars, 1938*

Malgré les assurances données par le Reich au Ministre de Tchécoslovaquie à Berlin, le Gouvernement français nourrit de sérieuses appréhensions au sujet de la situation actuelle de la Tchécoslovaquie. Il est impossible en effet de ne pas remarquer l'accumulation des troupes allemandes en Autriche, qui dépasse de beaucoup le nombre nécessaire pour de simples opérations de police. En second lieu, l'offre du Gouvernement allemand de retirer ses troupes à quinze kilomètres de la frontière si l'armée tchécoslovaque effectuait un retrait analogue, ne peut être prise au sérieux, les troupes motorisées pouvant franchir cette distance en quelques moments. Reste enfin l'agitation entretenue parmi les Allemands des Sudètes, qui peut toujours constituer une préparation à un coup de force. Dans ces conditions on peut se demander si les assurances données à M. Mastny ne sont pas destinées à endormir l'opinion publique des Puissances occidentales. La situation actuelle nous commande en tout cas d'exercer la plus grande vigilance et de marquer avec la plus grande netteté nos intentions au cas où un conflit viendrait à éclater entre l'Allemagne et la Tchécoslovaquie.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 530 [R 2672/162/12]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 15, 1938*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called to see me this afternoon. He said that he had no doubt that His Majesty's Government would recognise, as did the French Government, how critical was the present situation, and the French Government felt that at any moment events might occur which would call for the most urgent decision. I should no doubt have seen the statements made by M. Delbos a few days ago as to the immediate action that France would take in the event of any aggression being perpetrated on Czechoslovakia, and it was the intention of the new Foreign Minister to repeat this statement of policy at the earliest opportunity. He did not wish to put any question to me which might at the present moment be one not within the power of His Majesty's Government to answer, although I should have no doubt in my mind as to what the question was.

2. He then proceeded to enquire for what reason it had been that the Prime Minister, in making his statement in Parliament yesterday with regard to German assurances given to Czechoslovakia, had not mentioned that we had, as his Excellency understood, at once informed the German Government that we took note of these assurances and had sought their authority to make them public. I told him that the Prime Minister's statement had, of necessity, been hurriedly drafted and that no significance attached to the omission of the particular point he mentioned from it, nor indeed did I clearly see in what way the assurances would have been reinforced by its inclusion. His Excellency said that he did attach some importance to the point he had made, for the reason, as he expressed it, that a contract between two persons was invested with a more solemn character if it was concluded in the presence of a witness. We should have contributed something of the same kind to the German assurances to Czechoslovakia if we had formally published the action that we had taken in regard to them.

3. I told him that on this last point that he had mentioned I should be very ready to supplement what the Prime Minister had said in the sense that the Ambassador had indicated in a speech I should have to make in the House of Lords to-morrow,<sup>1</sup> and he said he would be grateful if this could be done.

<sup>1</sup> In the House of Lords, on Wednesday March 16, Lord Halifax said: 'It is true, as I stated in the House on Monday, that certain assurances have been given to the Czechoslovak Government by the German Government. When I learned of those assurances I at once took steps to convey to the German Government that His Majesty's Government took note of them and would be glad of the German Government's permission to communicate them to Parliament. That permission having been accorded, I placed Your Lordships, as my right honourable friend the Prime Minister placed another place, in possession of the actual term of the assurances so given. By these assurances, solemnly given and more than once repeated, we naturally expect the German Government to abide. And if indeed they desire to see European peace maintained, as I earnestly hope they do, there is no quarter of Europe in

With regard to the question that he had not asked, I told him that I need not assure him how much these matters were in the mind of His Majesty's Government, but that I was not at present in a position to say more. I added that I had mentioned to the Prime Minister the suggestion that I had thrown out in our last conversation,<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* that it might be useful to have a consultation with French Ministers here upon the general situation. The Prime Minister was disposed to welcome the suggestion, but it seemed both to him and to me that it would be well to wait a few days to see whether the new Government in France was securely established. His Excellency agreed, saying that M. Blum would, in his opinion, get a majority on Thursday, but that, whatever Government was in office, French policy in this matter would remain the same.

4. I finally spoke to him in general terms upon the great importance that we attached to everything possible being done to facilitate progress on the Non-Intervention Committee. We had, as he knew, connected our Italian conversations with a settlement of the Spanish issue, and it was for this reason that we were particularly anxious to make as much progress with the work of the Non-Intervention Committee as would enable us to test by actual performance the value of Italian assurances. He said that he of course appreciated the point, and said that the French Government would do everything that they could, though the matter presented considerable difficulty for them.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

which it is more vital that undertakings should be scrupulously respected.' See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of L., Vol. 108, cols. 178-82.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 62.

## No. 84

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16)*

*No. 164 Saving<sup>1</sup>: Telegraphic [R 2650/162/12]*

PARIS, March 15, 1938

A semi-official announcement published throughout the French Press of March 15 states that the first person received by M. Paul-Boncour after taking over the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was the Czechoslovak Minister, M. Osusky. M. Blum, wishing to emphasise the importance of this meeting, had insisted on it taking place at the Présidence du Conseil, where M. Osusky was received simultaneously by the Head of the Government and the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

There the semi-official announcement ends, but it is universally accepted that MM. Blum and Paul-Boncour renewed to M. Osusky previous French assurances that Czechoslovakia can count on France's military assistance in the event of her being attacked by Germany. Writing in the 'Petit Parisien'

<sup>1</sup> Telegrams with this designation were normally sent by diplomatic bag.

this morning M. Lucien Bourgues adds that MM. Blum and Paul-Boncour, furthermore and for the first time, examined with the Czechoslovak representative the practical form which such assistance might take; and that the bases for a common Franco-Czechoslovak defence policy having thus been laid, it is probable that the Conseil Supérieur de la Défense Nationale will consider the matter very shortly.

It is widely reported in the Press that instructions were sent to the French Ambassador in London to inform His Majesty's Government of the decisions taken at the meeting with M. Osusky; and that M. Corbin carried out his instructions so that the Prime Minister was informed before the Debate opened in the House of Commons on March 14.

For this reason special interest has been taken here in Mr. Chamberlain's references to Czechoslovakia. Though there is some underlying disappointment at the fact that these were not explicit as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government in the event of a German aggression against Czechoslovakia, his remarks are nevertheless felt to justify belief in the possibility of interesting developments in British policy in this respect.

Copy sent to Berlin and Prague.

## No. 85

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16)*  
*No. 72 Telegraphic [R 2673/162/12]*

MOSCOW, March 15, 1938

In a conversation which I had with M. Litvinov today he said that he was sure that Herr Hitler having now annexed Austria was not going to stop there and would soon proceed to deal with Czechoslovakia. His plan regarding Austria had been laid some time ago: Dr. Schuschnigg's proposal for a plebiscite was the pretext for action, but some other pretext would anyhow have been found. He (M. Litvinov) did not know what plan or method Herr Hitler would use towards Czechoslovakia. In the event of a military attack on her France of course was under obligation to go to the assistance of Czechoslovakia. As to Soviet pact with the latter it was dependent upon that of France. He believed Herr Hitler was not afraid of any active opposition owing to the weakness shown by Great Britain and France in various stages of German menace in the past and the absence of collective security and failure of the League Powers to make a front against the aggressors. On the other hand I must say that I am just informed confidentially that M. Litvinov yesterday told one of my colleagues that he did *not* think Herr Hitler had as yet any intention of a move upon Czechoslovakia.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)*  
*No. 17 Saving: Telegraphic [R 2755/162/12]*

PRAGUE, March 15, 1938

Having liquidated Austria, the Government of the Reich will doubtless soon tackle the next item on their programme, Czechoslovakia.

2. How precisely they will proceed it is impossible to prophesy, but the indications are that they will at first seek to achieve their aims by friendly diplomacy rather than by physical or economic terrorism. Later on they may attempt to use Henlein as the Seyss-Inquart of Czechoslovakia, or at least of the Sudeten areas. In any case, it seems necessary to assume that no scruples will deter them from pursuing their aims by fair means or foul. What those aims are can only be guessed, but, apart from the Sudeten German question, they can hardly be less than that Czechoslovakia should neutralise herself like Switzerland, Belgium or even Poland.

3. During my interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on March 12 Dr. Krofta said that, of course, Czechoslovakia would welcome some definite promise of support from His Majesty's Government, but he evidently thought this would not be forthcoming, and perhaps feared that an attempt to obtain it might estrange British sympathy.<sup>1</sup> My impression is that the Czechoslovak Government, while very anxious in regard to the future and possibly somewhat divided in their counsels, still believe they can continue with their present policy so long as they can count on France as an ally, and so long as France in her turn counts on early, if not immediate, British support if she involves herself in hostilities with Germany over Czechoslovakia.

4. If, therefore, His Majesty's Government feel justified in accepting such commitments or risks as will enable Czechoslovakia, when the test comes, to preserve her complete independence against brute force or economic strangulation, the sooner Germany can be convinced that if she tried to intimidate Czechoslovakia, she will be barking up the wrong tree, the better.

5. At the same time, I feel bound to draw attention to the misgivings that fill my mind as to the practicability of such a policy. There seems no certainty that any warning we might give would deter Germany from a resort to force, while by encouraging the Czechoslovak Government to resist any form of compromise it might even render a clash more inevitable. Should war come, nothing that we or France could do would save Czechoslovakia from being overrun, and all we could hope to achieve would be to restore after a lengthy struggle a *status quo* which had already proved unacceptable and which, even if restored, would probably again prove unworkable. For even if the Reich eventually ceased to be inspired by the Nazi ambitions revealed in 'Mein

<sup>1</sup> In an earlier account of this interview on March 12, Mr. Newton reported that Dr. Krofta was perturbed at Herr Hitler's references to the Holy Roman Empire, since Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia had been among its historic provinces, and 'he evidently feared that Reich had it particularly in mind to include Czechoslovakia in a Confederation which would, of course, be dominated by the Reich'.



Kampf', Germany would, I fear, never rest content with a potentially hostile Czechoslovakia thrust into her flank, and would only await some opportunity to force Czechoslovakia from a political position which does not seem to me to be one of natural stability.

6. A further consideration is whether, apart from protection against military invasion, we can effectively help Czechoslovakia to resist the economic pressure which Germany is now presumably in a position to apply.

7. If my misgivings are justified and if I am right in thinking that, having regard to her geographical situation, her history and the racial divisions of her population, Czechoslovakia's present political position is not permanently tenable, it will be no kindness in the long run to try to maintain her in it. We should rather make it as easy for her as possible to adjust her position to the circumstances of post-war Europe while she can still do so in more favourable conditions than will obtain later. This may be a hard saying, but, if it is right, it would seem prudent for ourselves, and fair to France and Czechoslovakia, to convey to them a timely warning, doing so, of course, in such a friendly and confidential manner as will not handicap Czechoslovakia in the adjustment of her relations with Germany. Should France, nevertheless, think it worth while to try to perpetuate the *status quo* in her own interests, I submit that she should do so with her own strength, and that His Majesty's Government are entitled to decline the risk of involving Great Britain in a fresh war in order to shore up the present position if it is one which seems to us fundamentally unsound.

8. I fully realise that there is a great deal to be said on the other side of the argument. From the point of view of personal sympathy, I should be only too pleased if, on a review of wider considerations than those with which I am here concerned, His Majesty's Government found it possible to adopt a policy which would maintain Czechoslovak independence without any impairment. For the Czechs, unlike the Austrians, know what they want, and, if sufficiently backed, would probably be prepared to fight for it. But I am anxious that in framing the policy of His Majesty's Government the foregoing considerations shall be given due weight on the long view.<sup>2</sup>

(Repeated to Berlin and Paris.)

<sup>2</sup> On March 17 (telegram No. 123 sent at 12.15 p.m.) Sir N. Henderson telegraphed: 'I share unreservedly and in all respects views expressed by Mr. Newton in this telegram.'

#### No. 87

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 19)*

*No. 253 [R 2959/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 15, 1938

My Lord,

Although the violation of Austrian independence is now past history, it may be useful to place on record the events of the 11th March, as seen from this post.

2. Dr. Schuschnigg broadcast his intention to hold a plebiscite in Austria

on the evening of the 9th March. The German press made no mention of his speech until the evening of the 10th, when it was obvious that it had been received here with uncompromising hostility. In the course of that day Herr Hitler decided on immediate action, and by the morning of the 11th I was informed by His Majesty's consul-general at Munich that mobilisation had been ordered in Bavaria and that troops were advancing towards the Austrian frontier. By the following day those troops had actually entered Vienna.

3. As soon as the news of troop movements reached me, I asked my military attaché to call at the War Office and ascertain the facts of the case and, in Herr von Ribbentrop's absence, I requested Baron von Neurath urgently to receive me. The latter replied that he could not receive me before 5 p.m., and the former told Colonel Mason-MacFarlane that no troop movements had been issued by the Ministry for War. It was not till the late afternoon that the latter summoned the military attaché again, apologised for the incorrect version given earlier in the day and made some grudging admissions regarding troop movements.

4. In the course of the morning I received the instructions contained in your telegram No. 73,<sup>1</sup> in which you left it to my discretion whether I should convey them to Herr Hitler himself. I felt convinced that the latter would find some plausible excuse for postponing my interview with him till it was too late, and I consequently decided that it was better that I should first see Baron von Neurath as I had already arranged to do. I have, in fact, no doubt but that I should have received from Hitler an answer on the same lines as that returned by Mussolini to the French representative at Rome.

5. During the morning I saw both the French Ambassador, whom I informed of the action which I was taking, and also the Austrian Minister, to whom I promised to speak to Baron von Neurath in the sense of the instructions which he had himself received from Vienna.

6. I did so, in fact, when I called on Baron von Neurath at 5 p.m. I communicated to the latter the texts of your telegrams Nos. 70 and 71,<sup>2</sup> and impressed upon him the extreme gravity of the situation. I requested him to communicate the texts which I left with him and the substance of my own representations to the Chancellor without delay, and at the same time I warned him that, if Germany took the action which I feared that she was contemplating, its effect would be irretrievably to damage Germany's reputation in British eyes and effectually put an abrupt end to our efforts to improve relations.

7. Baron von Neurath himself undoubtedly appreciated the inadvisability both of the employment of brute force and of alienating British public opinion, but he was completely recalcitrant on the subject of Dr. Schuschnigg and would listen to none of my arguments in his favour. He constantly repeated that the holding of a plebiscite at such brief notice constituted a direct provocation which rendered it impossible for reasonable people like himself to restrain any longer the extremist elements which surrounded the Chancellor.

<sup>1</sup> No. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 8 and 9.

8. I had visited Baron von Neurath in his private villa, but, when our conversation was over, he accompanied me as far as the Chancellery with a view to taking immediate action on my representations. After seeing him, I still had some hope that extreme measures would be avoided, since he assured me that all that the German Government demanded was that the plebiscite should be postponed for a fortnight. He made no mention even of insistence on Dr. Schuschnigg's retirement.

9. On my return to the Embassy I learnt of the demand for the resignation of the Austrian Chancellor and of your language to Herr von Ribbentrop on this subject. I at once addressed an urgent note to Baron von Neurath at the Chancellery in accordance with the instructions contained in your telegram No. 77.<sup>3</sup> A few hours later I received your telegram No. 79<sup>4</sup> in regard to the definite ultimatum which was reported to have been addressed by Germany to the Austrian Government. In conformity with the instructions therein, I addressed a second note to Baron von Neurath pointing out that, if this report were correct, His Majesty's Government felt bound to register a protest in the strongest terms against such use of coercion, backed by force, against an independent State in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence. I further informed the Minister that you had already made it clear to Herr von Ribbentrop in London that such action was bound to produce the gravest reaction, the issues of which it was impossible to foretell.

10. The French Ambassador received instructions to join with me in this protest, and did so in identical terms.

11. By this time it was 10 p.m. and as I had previously accepted an invitation to a large party which was being given by Field-Marshal Göring at the 'Haus der Flieger', I decided to attend it. Meanwhile, I learnt that Dr. Schuschnigg had resigned, and that Dr. Seyss-Inquart had taken over charge at Vienna and in a wireless broadcast had foreshadowed the possible entry of German troops into Austria.

12. The performance—which for all my foreign colleagues and myself was a most unpleasant experience—began with a concert and a ballet, but as soon as the music was over I found an opportunity to talk alone with the field-marshal. I described to him the terms of the urgent note which I had just addressed to Baron von Neurath warning the German Government of the reactions which would certainly be aroused in England by any forcible action against Austria, and I made it clear to him that the consequences might be extremely dangerous. The field-marshal denied that his Government had sent any ultimatum at all to Austria. It was, he said, an ultimatum presented to an Austrian by Austrians. I told him frankly that no one would believe that. He was offended and asked me to believe the word of honour of the second man in Germany, namely, himself. At the same time, he admitted that 'of course' there had been telephonic communications between Vienna and Berlin. He added that the only condition laid by Hitler himself had been in regard to the readmission into Austria of the Austrian Nazis in Germany.

<sup>3</sup> No. 29.

<sup>4</sup> No. 39.

The field-marshal used the same arguments as Baron von Neurath had done as to action having been forced on Hitler by Dr. Schuschnigg's failure to abide by the Berchtesgaden agreement. He gave the official German version of the sequence of events which had led up to Dr. Schuschnigg's resignation and his replacement by Seyss-Inquart, and concluded by stating that the latter had asked for the assistance of German troops, which would accordingly be crossing the frontier that night.

13. I told the field-marshal that I was appalled at the consequences which might ensue from such unjustifiable measures of interference with an independent country, and said that, speaking personally, I should not like to guarantee that war might not result. He replied that it was too late to modify the decisions which had already been taken and attempted to justify the invasion on the ground that Seyss-Inquart feared trouble from the communistic elements of Vienna New Town,<sup>5</sup> who, he said, had been armed by the mayor. The one thing which Hitler wished to avoid was, he said, bloodshed, and this could only be warranted by a display of overwhelming force. He assured me, however, that as soon as the position was normal again, the German troops would be withdrawn, and that, thereafter, free elections would be held whereby Austria could decide her own fate. There was, he added, no doubt whatsoever as to which way she would decide. I agreed, under pressure of German bayonets and S.S. men, but the field-marshal repeated that the troops would be withdrawn before the plebiscite took place.

14. Throughout the conversation the field-marshal was clearly nervous and ill at ease. At the same time it was quite obvious that all verbal protest was unavailing, and that, even had he been willing to pause, Hitler had made up his mind and was not to be deterred even by force. Göring kept reverting to Hitler's own Austrian origin, to his determination not to allow Austrian lives to be sacrificed and to his resentment against what he described as Dr. Schuschnigg's betrayal of Germanism. To this last I replied that what Dr. Schuschnigg may have done was no excuse, and that, even if he had behaved foolishly, it did not justify Germany's bullying a small nation and risking thereby the peace of the whole of Europe. In this latter connexion Göring mentioned to me that he had given the most formal assurances to the Czechoslovak Minister of German goodwill towards his country.

I have &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>5</sup> The reference here appears to be to Wiener Neustadt.

## No. 88

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 10.15 a.m.)*  
*No. 118 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2678/137/3]*

BERLIN, March 16, 1938

I hear from a German source that German Nazi Extremists have taken complete control in Austria and that all Austrians, even Austrian Nazis, are

being pushed into the background. There have been numerous arrests all over Austria and it is feared that a policy of vengeance may be pursued against Dr. Schuschnigg and his supporters.

I am doing all I can privately here both with Baron von Neurath and Field-Marshal Göring to whom I wrote personal letter yesterday morning regarding treatment of Schuschnigg etc. in which I made it clear that I was acting on my own initiative. I believe moderate elements intend to urge on Hitler advisability of showing generous toleration and of allowing Austrians some say in the Government of their own country. But these efforts are bound to fail if Hitler is represented abroad as having been subjected to foreign pressure.



## CHAPTER II

### Attitude of His Majesty's Government with regard to possible German action against Czechoslovakia: approach to French and Czechoslovak Governments (March 16–April 26, 1938)

#### No. 89

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 16, 7.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 31 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2702/162/12]*

PRAGUE, March 16, 1938

Czechoslovakian General Staff have received following substantiated reports regarding German military activity.

A. Excessive number of reservists of various classes have been called up for training especially in Bavaria and Saxony.

B. Reserve remounts and mechanical transport have been remustered in Bavaria, Saxony and Silesia.

C. Reserve officers in Saxony and Bavaria have been called up.

D. Militia units have been identified in frontier zones of Bavaria and Saxony.

E. Troops have been concentrated in frontier regions at Zinnwald, Annaberg, Weiden and Cham.

F. Frontier garrisons have been placed on a footing of preparedness.

G. Strength of troops now in Austria appears far in excess of requirements. German Military Attaché was informed by General Staff this morning of these reports and invited to explain how they tallied with assurances to Czechoslovak Minister. In reply he denied knowledge of any abnormal measures beyond those required for dealing with Austrian situation and gave personal reaffirmation of Field-Marshal Göring's assurances. He stated that German troops now in Austria consisted only of four infantry divisions and one Panzer division which in his opinion was not excessive. These statements he confirmed later in the day after telephoning to the War Office in Berlin.

General Staff do not believe measures referred to in paragraph one constitute any immediate danger to this country. They are however concerned over apparently unnecessary increase in German forces in Austria as well as over following points:

(A) An unconfirmed report that 8th army corps at Breslau has been placed in a state of readiness.

(B) An unaccountable diminution in active German wireless transmission intercepted by Czechs. This had previously been fully occupied in reporting troop movements in Austria.



(C) The fact that Grenzschutz has been conspicuously less active and in some areas has been withdrawn.

Though General Staff feel some disquiet they have decided to take no measures as yet which might be regarded as provocative by Germany such as calling up of any class of reservists or moving troops.

Air Attaché is informed by General Staff that Minister for Foreign Affairs asked German Minister for similar explanation to that asked from German Military Attaché. German Minister after enquiring from Berlin repeated assurance that Germany had no designs whatever against Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Berlin and Vienna.

## No. 90

*The Soviet Ambassador in London to Viscount Halifax<sup>1</sup>*

[C 1935/95/62]

LONDON, March 17, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to draw your attention to the text of a statement (attached hereto) made to-day by the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, M. M. Litvinoff to the representatives of the press in Moscow.

I have the honour to point out that the contents of this statement represent the point of view of the Soviet Government in regard to the present international problems.

Accept, &c.,  
J. MAISKY

ENCLOSURE IN No. 90

Translation<sup>2</sup>

March 17, 1938

Having entered the League of Nations for the purpose of organised collaboration with other peaceful States the Soviet Government has not missed<sup>3</sup> a single appropriate occasion to recommend the most effective guarantees for peace which guarantees it saw<sup>4</sup> in the organisation of a system of collective security within the framework of the League of Nations as well as of regional pacts of mutual assistance against aggressors. The Soviet Government has in practice embarked on this path having concluded such a pact with France and Czechoslovakia, a pact which<sup>5</sup> in the absence of aggression does not threaten any state.

The violations of international obligations of the Covenant of the League

<sup>1</sup> This note was handed to Sir A. Cadogan by M. Maisky on March 17, at 1.20 p.m. Sir A. Cadogan minuted that a similar communication was being made in Paris, Washington and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> On March 18 the Soviet Ambassador, in a note to Sir A. Cadogan, presented a revised version of this translation and described it as 'the authentic version of M. Litvinov's statement'. The emendations which follow are made from this revised translation.

<sup>3</sup> The revised text reads: 'has never missed'.

<sup>4</sup> The revised text reads: 'which it saw'.

<sup>5</sup> The revised text reads: 'such pacts with France and Czechoslovakia, pacts which'.

of Nations and of the Paris Briand-Kellogg Pact which have taken place during the last four years, attacks of some states upon others,<sup>6</sup> have given the Soviet Government opportunities to reveal<sup>7</sup> not only its negative attitude towards these international crimes but also its readiness to take an active part in all measures directed towards the organisation of collective resistance to the aggressor, disregarding even the inevitable deterioration of its relations with the aggressor. The Soviet Government on these occasions warned that international passivity<sup>8</sup> and impunity of aggression in one instance will inevitably result in repetitions and multiplication of such incidents.

The events in the international sphere unfortunately prove the correctness of these warnings,<sup>9</sup> and they have received new confirmation in the effected<sup>10</sup> military invasion of Austria and the forcible deprivation of the Austrian people of its political, economic and cultural independence. If<sup>11</sup> formerly cases of aggression have taken place on continents more or less distant from Europe or on the fringes of Europe where alongside the interests of the victim of aggression only the interests of some of the nearest countries have been affected; in this case however the violence has been committed<sup>12</sup> in the centre of Europe thus creating an undoubted menace, not only to the eleven states now adjacent to the aggressor, but to all European countries and not only European. For the time being a menace has been created to the territorial inviolability<sup>13</sup> and in any case to the political, economic and cultural independence of the small nations, the inevitable enslavement of which will however create a prerequisite for pressure and even for attack also upon big Powers.

In the first place there is<sup>14</sup> a menace to Czechoslovakia and the danger—and in this direction lies the contagion of aggression—threatens<sup>15</sup> to develop into a new international conflict<sup>16</sup> and is already reflected in the tense<sup>17</sup> situation which has developed on the Polish-Lithuanian frontier.

The present international situation puts<sup>18</sup> before the peace-loving countries and in particular before the big<sup>19</sup> powers the question of their

<sup>6</sup> The revised text reads: 'Briand-Kellogg Pact, and the attacks of some states against others which have occurred in the last four years.'

<sup>7</sup> The revised text reads: 'have provided the Soviet Government opportunities to demonstrate'.

<sup>8</sup> The revised text reads: 'inaction'.

<sup>9</sup> The revised text reads: 'Unfortunately, international developments have justified these warnings'.

<sup>10</sup> The revised text reads: 'armed'.

<sup>11</sup> The revised text reads: 'While'.

<sup>12</sup> The revised text reads: 'perpetrated'.

<sup>13</sup> The revised text reads: 'integrity'.

<sup>14</sup> The revised text reads: 'arises'.

<sup>15</sup> The revised text reads: 'but owing to the contagious character of the aggression, the danger threatens'.

<sup>16</sup> The revised text reads: 'new international conflicts'.

<sup>17</sup> The revised text reads: 'alarming'.

<sup>18</sup> The revised text reads: 'places'.

<sup>19</sup> The revised text reads: 'great'.

responsibility for the future fate<sup>20</sup> of the peoples of Europe and elsewhere. The Soviet Government being conscious<sup>21</sup> of the obligations devolving upon it from the Covenant of the League, the Briand-Kellogg Pact and from its treaties of mutual assistance concluded with France and Czechoslovakia, I am in a position to state on its behalf that the Soviet Government is on its part as heretofore prepared to participate in collective actions the scope of which should be decided in conjunction with the Soviet Government, and which should have as its aim the stopping of the further developments of aggression and the elimination<sup>22</sup> of the increased danger of a new world slaughter.<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet Government is prepared to commence immediately together with other States in the League of Nations or outside of it the consideration<sup>24</sup> of practical measures called for by the present circumstances.

Tomorrow it may be too late, but to-day the time has not yet passed if all the States and especially the Great Powers will adopt a firm and unequivocal<sup>25</sup> stand in regard to the problems of the collective saving<sup>26</sup> of peace.

<sup>20</sup> The revised text reads: 'destiny'.

<sup>21</sup> The revised text reads: 'cognisant'.

<sup>22</sup> The revised text reads: 'actions which would be decided upon jointly with it, and which would aim at checking the further development of aggression and at eliminating'.

<sup>23</sup> The revised text reads: 'massacre'.

<sup>24</sup> The revised text reads: 'discussion'.

<sup>25</sup> The revised text reads 'unequivocal'.

<sup>26</sup> The revised text reads: 'problem of the collective salvation'.

## No. 91

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17, 2.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 32 Telegraphic [R 2791/162/12]*

PRAGUE, March 17, 1938, 1.50 p.m.

My despatch No. 57.<sup>1</sup>

Henlein has published appeal to all Sudeten Germans to join Sudeten German party pointing to events in Austria as showing that by unity and . . .<sup>2</sup> a people will triumph over all methods of force and injustice. Translation follows by air mail. Party's press office has also announced that new members will only be admitted up to May 31 after which new enrolments will be indefinitely stopped.

German Agrarian party held meeting yesterday at which it was decided to sever connexion with central office of German Activist parties. This party at the same time announced its intention to present to parliament immediately four bills providing amongst other things for national self-administration in cultural, economic and social policy and in administration.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this despatch Mr. Newton gave the views of Herr Jaksch, deputy-chairman of the Sudeten German Social Democratic party.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 92

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 17)*  
*No. 73 Telegraphic [R 2855/162/12]*

MOSCOW, March 17, 1938

My telegram No. 72.<sup>1</sup>

'Authoritative spokesman' referred to in British wireless of March 16 was Litvinov, who was interviewed by various foreign journalists at a diplomatic reception on March 15 shortly after I had seen him. Only British correspondent in Moscow was not present and journalists' accounts of what Litvinov really said differ in some respects. He certainly told them that U.S.S.R. would intervene in defence of Czechoslovakia if France did, and when pressed to state how this would be accomplished in the absence of common frontier, he appears to have replied 'means would be found'. When it was suggested that this must involve 'creation of a corridor' he is said by one journalist to have assented, actually repeating these words. According to another account he assented more vaguely. One of the correspondent's messages describing this statement about a corridor was stopped by the censor but another in almost identical terms was later passed.

In a separate interview a correspondent asked for,<sup>2</sup> Litvinov merely stated 'means would be found'.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 85.

<sup>2</sup> This sentence was subsequently amended to read: 'In a separate interview with the correspondent of "Le Temps", Litvinov merely stated "means would be found".'

No. 93

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received March 17, 7.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 125 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2817/162/12]*

BERLIN, March 17, 1938

Czech Minister called on me this morning to enquire whether I had any information as to whether Herr Hitler would mention, and if so what he would say regarding Czechoslovakia in Reichstag tomorrow. He was, he said, perturbed at failure of German press to make any reference [to] assurances given to him by Field-Marshal Göring as quoted by you and the Prime Minister in Parliament. All sorts of rumours were, he added, current and there was a general feeling of uneasiness abroad which would certainly be aggravated if Hitler failed to mention those assurances in his speech.

I told Czech Minister that while it should be common sense to believe that Hitler as a matter of tactics, if nothing else, would, while glorifying Austrian achievement, endeavour tomorrow to allay fears in other quarters I could not but share to some extent his apprehension. I would not have done so a fortnight ago and even now I could hardly imagine that Herr Hitler, having just achieved his primary objective, would risk all again for a secondary one

before he had consolidated the first and was fully prepared for the second. But it was I feared possible that success had gone to his head and even more possible that it had gone to the heads of the extremist followers, who might carry their leader away with them.

I gave Czech Minister confidentially an account of various references made to his country in conversations with me since March 3 by Hitler, Göring and Baron von Neurath and told him that I regarded it as of the utmost importance that Czech Government should preserve its *sang-froid* and do nothing which might be construed as provocative. Hitler was always boasting about keeping his word, or, if he broke it, found excuses for justifying his breach of it. He had just given instance of this as regards Dr. Schuschnigg's plebiscite. He had given his word to Czechoslovakia this time by the mouth of Field-Marshal Göring and it was essential that nothing should be done to provide excuse for them to go back on it. At the same time my advice to the Czechoslovak Minister was to see Herr von Ribbentrop and to express to him the hope that something might be said in Hitler's speech to reassure public opinion in Czechoslovakia. I told him confidentially that Field-Marshal Göring had expressed to me appreciation of calmness and reserve displayed by Czechoslovak Government last week and suggested that without reference to Göring and myself he might propose an allusion in the speech in this sense to Czechoslovakia, coupled with confident hope that Austrian question being settled, relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia would now improve. I added that had I thought it would serve a useful purpose I would have been quite willing to make an approach on these lines myself but that I believed that intervention, even personal, on my part at this juncture might produce the opposite effect to that which was intended. As Czechoslovakia was directly affected there could on the other hand be no exception taken to action by him on these lines. Czech Minister agreed and said that he himself preferred to and would make his representations to the State Secretary rather than to the Minister for Foreign Affairs himself.

Repeated to Prague.

#### No. 94

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 18, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 35 Telegraphic [R 2854/162/12]*

PRAGUE, March 17, 9.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 31.<sup>1</sup>

Political Director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed me March 17 that the Czechoslovak Government were satisfied that no (? dangerous)<sup>2</sup> concentrations of German troops were taking place.

He was ready to believe assurances of General Göring for the time being because in his opinion the German Government were not yet prepared to face the risk of provoking general conflagration.

Repeated to Berlin and Vienna.

<sup>1</sup> No. 89.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.



*Mr. Mack (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 19)*

*No. 149 Telegraphic [R 2989/137/3]*

VIENNA, March 19, 1938

Military Attaché considers, and his French and Czechoslovakian colleagues agree, that according to present developments here no fresh forward movement is immediately contemplated by Germany. War material is not being sent up and none of German S.S. and police are being sent back. German authorities seem to be acting on the assumption that *fait accompli* is accepted and to be consolidating their position by establishing complete German control of every branch of the country's life.

The first enthusiasm has waned and apart from youth there are few cheerful faces to be seen in Vienna. Many Austrian Nazis even who had hoped to control the country themselves with German support if required are disillusioned. Other Austrians are dispirited and apprehensive while the Jews are being treated as in Germany and I have heard many stories of acts of brutality committed against them. Unofficial Austrian bands have no doubt been active and Bürckel has today issued a strong warning against unauthorised house searching and confiscation. Arrests have been numerous and are said to run into thousands of various classes: but many are probably 'protective'.

While above is the picture in Vienna today there is no doubt huge and outwardly enthusiastic crowds will assemble or be assembled whenever required. Nor is there any doubt that the plebiscite will be a triumph for its organisers.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Rome and Paris.

## No. 96

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20)*

*No. 43 Telegraphic [R 2973/162/12]*

PRAGUE, March 19, 1938

M. Benes informed me [on] March 18 that although on March 16 (see my telegram No. 31<sup>1</sup>) there had been some question whether Germany might not be secretly mobilizing he was now satisfied that Czechoslovakia was in no immediate danger. General Staff informed the Military Attaché this morning that they were not anxious concerning German troop movements in the vicinity of the Czech frontier.

President also told me that despite German denials there was no doubt that German military aeroplanes had flown over Czechoslovakian territory in five cases but only, he believed, for the purposes of reconnaissance to see whether mobilization was in fact taking place.

<sup>1</sup> No. 89.



M. Benes said that at the outset of the crisis he had given immediate instructions to prevent any action military, political or administrative, which might be construed in Germany as provocative. These instructions had been and were being carefully observed.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 97

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*  
*No. 69 [C 2115/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 22, 1938

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of despatch No. 8 from His Majesty's consul, Liberec (Reichenberg), of the 19th March, 1938, respecting the effect of the 'Anschluss' on the Sudeten Germans.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 97

*Consul Pares to Mr. Newton*  
*No. 8*

LIBEREC, March 19, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to report that it is now becoming apparent that the 'Anschluss' has set in motion an avalanche of national feeling amongst the Sudeten Germans which will soon lead to a united front of all Germans in the State and will be hard to control unless the Government is prepared to make concessions. The excitement and enthusiasm of everybody is very great indeed, and the feeling is growing that the problem of the Sudeten Germans will have to be resolved in the near future. A friend of mine who is attached to the 'Reichenberger Zeitung' was sent by his newspaper to Vienna last week-end and, since his return, all his friends, when he meets them in the street, shout out to him 'You lucky man!' Not even the Germans within the Reich can have received the news of the 'Anschluss' with greater joy than the people here. Hitler's recent speeches about Austria, in which he said that a true and genuine popular movement is irresistible in the long run have evidently made a deep impression, and the conviction appears to be growing that what is true for Austria must also be true for the Sudeten Germans. The 'Reichenberger Zeitung', which is non-party and has the reputation of being too luke-warm, published a leading article on the 18th March, worded in unusually emphatic terms. The article spoke of a 'new and powerful upward surge, a new and mighty movement towards unity. . . . We have less understanding than ever for a policy of waiting and promises; we want to see *deeds* at last. . . . The Sudeten Germans will no longer yield in the fight for their rights.' Other provincial newspapers of North Bohemia which I have seen adopt the same tone.

2. The Sudeten German party, in issuing an appeal for more members, has made good use of this new development of public opinion, and it is plain from all reports that there has been an excellent response to Konrad Henlein's summons. In Reichenberg itself I have had confirmation from more than one source that a large number of persons have applied for membership. It is a fact, as published in the 'Zeit', that the applicants were very numerous on the first day and that the supply of application forms gave out, so that the work of issuing membership cards had to be postponed until next week. Even the disaffected former members of the Sudeten German party who resigned to join Kasper<sup>1</sup> and Jonak's group are apparently eligible for readmission. I was told this by a member of the Aufbruch Group who was visited in his office by a canvasser and was assured that he would be readmitted, notwithstanding his recent resignation from the party. Only members who were actually expelled are not eligible, but my friend said he believed negotiations were being carried on between Kasper and the leaders of the Sudeten German party which might end in a reconciliation. No doubt such an arrangement would suit the policy and aims of Berlin, since, if Henlein can secure the united support of all Germans in this country, he will be able to bring pressure to bear upon the Prague Government against which its resistance seems almost certain to break down.

3. The decision of the Bund der Landwirte to withdraw from the central Activist agency seems likely to be followed by further developments amongst the Activists. Yesterday, I learned that the Reichenberg branch of the Christian Socialist party had decided to dissolve itself and to join the Sudeten German party. This decision, which is apparently not to be published yet, will be laid before the general conference of the Christian Socialist party fixed for next Monday. My informant said that it is expected that the whole party, under the leadership of its chairman, Senator Hilgenreiner, will dissolve itself and declare itself merged in the Sudeten German party. A hint of the probable outcome is conveyed in a brief notice published to-day by the 'Zeit', which says that at the conference of the Christian Socialists on Monday it is expected that 'even more drastic decisions will be made than those of the Bund der Landwirte'. The German Social Democrats are the least likely to desert the Government, but to-day it is reported that the deputy chairman, Jaksch, has resigned all his offices in the party and there can be little doubt that, though the outward excuse for his action is alleged to be the long-standing jealousy and differences between himself and Minister Czech,<sup>2</sup> the real reason is probably his dissatisfaction over the failure of the Activists to gain any real concessions from the Czechoslovak Government.

4. Several newspapers during the past week have published reports of the voluntary dissolution of local branches of the Bund der Landwirte and the Christian Socialists. Thus, there are good reasons for supposing that the next

<sup>1</sup> Herr Kasper and the 'Aufbruch' group represented the extreme Nazi standpoint amongst the Sudeten Germans in opposition to Herr Henlein.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ludwig Czech, leader of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party, was Minister of Health in the Czechoslovak Government.

few weeks will see the creation of a united front of all Germans under the leadership of the Sudeten German party.<sup>3</sup> The Deutsch-Demokratische Freiheitspartei, whose chairman is Senator Kostka, Mayor of Reichenberg, is not important from the parliamentary point of view, but it has had considerable influence in the municipality up to the present. Pressure is being brought to bear on officials in the town administration of Reichenberg who belong to this party, and they are being urged to resign. It is not improbable that they will allow themselves to be persuaded, and if this should happen on a large scale an awkward situation might arise. The existing town administration in Reichenberg has been unpopular for several years, and has taken no pains to conciliate the opposition, but has rather aggravated it. If the Sudeten German party could show that the mayor had not even sufficient members in his party to staff the city offices, the agitation for his resignation and new elections might well become intense. The only alternative would be the appointment of a Czech Government commissioner, which would be worse than anything. The mayor considers it his duty as a German to remain in his office in order to avoid such a situation, but his attitude finds no sympathy in the town. I describe the state of affairs in detail because the problem of municipal elections is a very difficult and dangerous one at the present time, and because it is clear that if the Sudeten German party were now provided with such an excellent opportunity of presenting to the Sudeten Germans and the world at large a glaring instance of the anti-democratic practice of the Czechoslovak Government, this would be enough, under present disturbed conditions, to bring the excitement of the Sudeten Germans to the boiling point. Reichenberg has a symbolic importance for them, and it is regarded as their principal town. The cry that people there were being denied their elementary democratic rights would provide a good parallel to the charges of oppression levelled against Schuschnigg in Austria.

5. Yesterday I called upon the mayor and was surprised to see a great change in him. He appeared thoroughly and perhaps unnecessarily alarmed. He even said that he feared the townspeople might 'storm the town hall'. This idea sounds fantastic, but he was quite serious in his belief that it might happen at any time. Last week he made a rather pugnacious speech in the Senate which has made him extremely unpopular here even among his own party friends and supporters. He declares that his statements have been misrepresented, but, be that as it may, he was most warmly booed and hissed when his name was mentioned by Rudolf Sandner in the large meeting of the Sudeten German party held here last Sunday. The 'Zeit' yesterday demanded his resignation, and added that 'it is intolerable that he should remain in office'. On Sunday the Minister of Social Welfare, Ing. Necas,

<sup>3</sup> On March 23 (telegram No. 37 Saving) Mr. Newton reported that 'the German Agrarian Party have now announced their decision to leave the Government and to amalgamate with the Sudeten German Party', and on March 25 (telegram No. 43 Saving) that 'the German Christian Socialist Party decided yesterday to leave the Government . . . the party will now make a common front with the Sudeten Deutsche Party, but, unlike the German Agrarians, the Christian Socialists maintain their independent organisation'.

visited the mayor along with the chief of the Liberec police and two leading Czech journalists. The two vice-mayors were also present. Senator Kostka mentioned that the Minister had been most sympathetic and had promised help. Kostka's requests were apparently for immediate allotment of textile contracts to local firms in order to reduce unemployment, and also the commencement of public works. I suspect, however, that the presence of the chief of police at the interview may have been connected with the mayor's alarms about his safety, and it is possible that some measures may have been agreed upon in case conciliation and public contracts fail to allay unrest. I do not think there is reason for anxiety at present, but I think it would be quite easy for the Sudeten German party, if it chose, to turn the popular indignation against Kostka to very good account and make his unpopularity the occasion for an energetic campaign for new elections.

6. Everybody agrees that the Czech police will now endeavour to avoid any incident which could lead to a general explosion. The chief of police in Liberec told me himself in conversation that these were his orders, and Senator Kostka said that everywhere they are withdrawing into the background as much as possible. 'Bohemia' reported on the 18th March that at a meeting of the Bund der Landwirte stones were thrown by members of the Sudeten German party, and that the representative of the political authorities was hurt. The police, however, seem to have made no arrests. Nevertheless, there is said to be much bad feeling among the Czechs, and I have had confirmation of this from several people.

I have, &c.

P. PARES

#### No. 98

*Mr. Newton (Prague) (Received March 30)*

*No. 29 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2222/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 19, 1938

It seems to me clear from daily perusal of Sudetic German press that minds of party are moving away from thoughts of mere autonomy to actual incorporation in the Reich.

They are continually harping on theme that that was desire of Sudetic Germans in 1918 and that it was only by treachery of Allied Powers (of whom Czechoslovakia was one) that population was denied right of self-determination, despite solemn promises of President Wilson on which Central Powers laid down their arms. In reply to Czech thesis that Sudetic population in 1918 demanded incorporation in Austria, not in Germany, it is argued that Austria herself then demanded incorporation in Germany and that desire of Sudetic Germans was to be part of an Austria within the Reich. Implication is that that remains their desire to-day.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received 7.0 p.m.)*

*No. 47 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2986/162/12]*

PRAGUE, March 20, 1938

M. Benes has informed me that on February 16 German Minister observed to him that negotiations between Great Powers for a general settlement might last a long time and asked whether Czechoslovakia would be prepared in meanwhile to negotiate separately with Germany. German Minister had said that Germany would never want Czechoslovakia to abandon her existing treaty with France.

M. Benes told German Minister that he wanted to make an agreement with Germany which would be 'manly, dignified, honest and clear'. Its terms must be such that it could be openly spoken of in London and Paris as well as in Berlin. The German Government need not be added fear any double-crossing (Doppelspiel) by Czechoslovakia. (M. Benes explained to me that in giving this last assurance he had in mind behaviour of Polish Government who had not been deterred by their agreement with Reich from secretly informing French Government at the time of German reoccupation of Rhineland that Poland was prepared to join France if she marched against the Reich. This action by Poland was, he said, known to German Government.)

No suggestion was discussed with German Minister as to the kind of agreement which might be made with Germany but I elicited from President that he had formerly hoped for something like a reaffirmation of existing Treaty of Arbitration which was guaranteed by France and concluded within complex of Locarno. This Treaty with its French guarantee by replacing existing strong Treaty of Alliance concluded with France in 1923 had itself been made as a contribution to Locarno. He would be prepared to make a similar contribution now but without France and Great Britain as guarantors or witnesses Czechoslovakia could not rely on word of Germany. For example Herr Hitler had solemnly announced that he had finished with policy of surprises but that had not prevented him from (? springing)<sup>1</sup> on us his recent action against Austria. From other sources I know that Minister for Foreign Affairs and doubtless also President consider the fate of Austria to be a grim warning against conclusion of an agreement by a weak country with Germany in isolation. Minister for Foreign Affairs fears that Germany will seek to obtain the signature of Czechoslovakia to some bilateral agreement and later on however innocent and apparently clear its terms the Reich will protest that they have not been faithfully observed and proceed to demand either acceptance of more compromising commitments or acting as a judge in their own case immediately execute whatever sentence they please against their victim. I observed to M. Benes that so far as I could discern German aims, one was to make sure that Czechoslovakian salient would never be a menace to the Reich.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.



In the course of further conversation M. Benes referred to German-Polish agreement of which he had not approved. Making it clear that I was not trying to convey any suggestions or doing other than trying to clarify my own impressions I observed that I had been in Germany at the time of its conclusion and I had personally been inclined to think that agreement itself had been a considerable and most surprising relief to international situation. I had thought then and was still disposed to think that it was not so much the agreement itself but the manner of its conclusion which had been unfortunate and caused resentment and suspicion in France. M. Benes said that he would never do anything disloyal to France or England or consider German proposals other than in association with France and England, or at any rate with their knowledge and approval. It would seem to follow, though I made no comment to suggest this, that if England and France urged him to conclude some agreement of a neutralizing character and would be prepared to guarantee or at least witness it M. Benes might possibly be persuaded to consider such a measure though probably indeed only with the utmost reluctance.

The President thought it possible that in speech to be made in Reichstag in a few minutes' time Herr Hitler might allude to German minorities and suggest that a solution ought to be attainable without undue difficulty. In that case, said M. Benes, he might reply (but not in public) that he was prepared to negotiate with Germany in agreement with France and Great Britain. Towards end of our conversation President added that it was his earnest desire to come to a reasonable settlement with Germany.

M. Benes seemed a little tired by the strain of the last week. Our conversation lasted three hours and a quarter and his remarks were not as clear and coherent as usual. For that reason in trying to report them in a less disjointed sequence than they were in fact made I cannot guarantee that I have exactly reproduced what was in President's mind.

Please repeat to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 100

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 20, 7.20 p.m.)  
No. 48 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3006/r62/12]*

PRAGUE, March 20, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

In referring to German minority problem the President said that a big decision and a long step forward had been taken last year when definite [? break]<sup>2</sup> has been made with previous Nationalist attitude and a change of mentality and psychology inaugurated.

Czechoslovak Government had now decided to go further and he was discussing with his Ministers a definite programme in regard to the appointment of officials, self-administration in education, and other matters in order to show the limit of concessions which could be made without injuring

<sup>1</sup> No. 99.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.



the State. This programme would be progressive and may be embodied in legislation or specific decrees.

M. Benes said that during a previous conversation I had referred to a policy of pin-pricks (see my despatch No. 330 of November 9). He had discussed this matter with the Minister of the Interior<sup>3</sup> and come to the conclusion that gendarmerie were mainly responsible. An Inspector-General of Police had accordingly been appointed with the special function of supervising the police in all minority areas with a view to elimination of pin-pricks. This officer had only been at work for the last two weeks but his appointment had already produced good results. Similar steps would be taken in regard to other branches of local administration. Changes would also be made in regard to the use of minority languages in public notices, etc. He explained that he meant notices in railway carriages and station offices which would be in German and Hungarian in the respective areas. This particular change seems therefore rather trivial. M. Benes mentioned also that he is considering what assurances could be given to minorities against alienation or 'Czechisation' of national property or institutions. I rather pressed for information as to whether some early announcement on this subject might be expected and he said that within the next month Prime Minister would probably make some statement on internal policy similar to that recently made on foreign affairs.

As regards Henlein Party he said it remained his final aim to bring them into the Government as Activists but on the two conditions that Activists themselves must not be sacrificed and that the totalitarian principles could not be admitted in a democratic state. Meanwhile any negotiations regarding concessions would take place with Activists although Henlein Party would be kept informed. M. Benes admitted Agrarians may secede from Activists but was confident that Catholics and Socialists amounting to some twenty-five per cent. would always remain opposed to Henlein. In this, as indeed in attitude which he continues to maintain to the minority questions, I fear that President may be cherishing illusions.

I expect to see the Prime Minister for an informal talk March 21 and may find that his views are more realist or at least conciliatory.

Please repeat to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Josef Cerny.

## No. 101

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 23)*

*No. 31 Saving: Telegraphic<sup>1</sup> [C 2041/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 21, 1938

Interspersed throughout an audience lasting from 4.30 until nearly 8 p.m. on March 18 M. Benes made a number of observations similar to those

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was sent by bag. On the morning of March 22 Mr. Newton telegraphed that the telegram should be treated as urgent.

expressed to Mr. Kennedy as reported in my telegram No. 33.<sup>2</sup> But partly it may be on account of fatigue and partly perhaps for reasons of diplomatic tactics he omitted such definite statements as those noted by Mr. Kennedy e.g. he refrained from saying that we should have to make a stand some time, so better now than later, or that he wanted an alliance with Great Britain, or that Czechoslovakia would fight to the death for her independence.

M. Benes intimated that the domination of Czechoslovakia was not so much an object in itself as an essential step towards realization of greater ambitions in south-eastern Europe. He thought that if France abandoned her position there she was finished as a Great Power and he believed that because she stood in the way of German ambitions towards that area her destruction was a German objective.

If present tension in Europe increased a small incident might provoke a conflagration but, said M. Benes, 'we can still save the peace if all pacific countries will resist'. Unless however the democratic countries show that they have a clear, precise and strong policy the little States will change their attitude and be so subjugated that the position will be worse than it was in 1914.

I tried to elucidate his views as to the nature and danger of German ambitions towards the south-east. He expressed opinion that they would be pursued by methods of peaceful economic penetration. I observed that this did not seem to me to be necessarily an occasion for war. The development of trade was in itself normal and desirable and although the resources of south-eastern Europe were not indeed now under German control they were already at her disposal through the ordinary processes of commerce.

At the end of our conversation the President emphasized that if we could pass through the present period of danger we should be able to come down to practical negotiations. An important condition was that France and England should show that they were united and strong and that they would admit no repetition of what had happened in Austria. It was, however, of course for Great Britain to judge her own interests.

At some stage I observed that Lord Baldwin had declared that Britain's frontier lay on the Rhine and that I thought it must be doubtful whether His Majesty's Government would be prepared to extend it any further towards the East, but I drew his attention to your statement in the House of Lords on March 16. The President expressed his gratitude for your statement and also his deep appreciation of what you and the Prime Minister

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. According to Mr. A. L. Kennedy, a British press representative visiting Czechoslovakia, M. Benes, in the course of this interview, said that Great Britain and France would certainly have 'to make a stand against Germany some time'. He suggested that 'the sooner we made it the better'. Dr. Benes used the phrase 'Czechoslovakia is only a little accident in the whole terrible world affair'. He said at first that a Czechoslovak agreement with the German Government meant surrender, but modified this view to the extent that, if he were joined in his negotiations by Great Britain and France, he might then reach a real agreement with Germany. In the last resort, however, Czechoslovakia would resist German aggression. 'Unlike Austria, we shall fight. We shall be massacred, but we will fight.'

had done, both in Parliament and at Berlin, with regard to the German assurances to Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

### No. 102

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24, 5.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 34 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2050/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 22, 1938

Since the German occupation of Austria correspondents of foreign newspapers have mostly left Vienna and many are now in Prague whence they have apparently been sending their editors reports, critical of the new conditions in Austria. I learn from Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin was summoned yesterday to German Minister for Foreign Affairs and informed that unless Czechoslovak Government took steps to put an end to this practice violent campaign would be launched against Czechoslovakia in the German press.

Minister for Foreign Affairs is summoning correspondents to-morrow and will beg them, in the interests of Czechoslovakia, to restrain their criticisms of events in Austria.

Repeated to Berlin.

### No. 103

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*  
*No. 67 [C 2114/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 22, 1938

My Lord,

As it was some time since I had had a conversation with Dr. Hodza, the Prime Minister, and I thought it might be useful at this critical juncture to ascertain his views as well as those of the Foreign Minister and the President, I took the opportunity of a social occasion to arrange for an informal talk which took place yesterday. The matters in which Dr. Hodza's views seemed to show some advance on those of Dr. Benes were briefly indicated in my telegram No. 50<sup>1</sup> of the 21st March. In this despatch and in my despatch No. 68<sup>2</sup> of to-day's date I now have the honour to inform you in detail of what Dr. Hodza said, firstly, on the German minority, and, secondly, on external affairs.

2. Without giving me much new information the Prime Minister showed, as was indeed to be expected from his record and party affiliations, a more conciliatory attitude towards the Sudeten German problem and a greater realisation of the need to go farther and faster in the search for a solution. Beginning with the negative side, full political autonomy was, said Dr. Hodza, impossible on technical and political grounds. Technically, because

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

<sup>2</sup> No. 104.

the German settlements were divided and within the German areas there were 380,000 Czechs in addition to the 2,500,000 Germans, while there were 730,000 Germans scattered throughout the remainder of the country. Any idea of an exchange of populations between the Sudeten and other areas was, he said, fantastic. Politically, autonomy would be disruptive and unduly weakening for the State; if granted to the German population it could hardly be withheld from the Hungarians and the Slovaks. Nor could the Government accept the idea put forward in the six parliamentary Bills for creating a racial association which would be legally incorporated and enjoy special privileges. Such a body was neither necessary nor possible and existed in no other country in the world.

3. Turning from the negative to the positive side, Dr. Hodza continued that what the Germans really wanted was self-administration ('Selbstverwaltung'), and this they could obtain as follows: When local elections were possible, the successful German party could appoint its own local officials and, as regards State Officials, he was already arranging for the transfer of Germans back to German areas. I referred to the fifty-fifty scheme outlined to me by the President (see my despatch No. 22 of the 25th January), and he said that even 50 per cent. would not be immediately practicable because that proportion of competent German officials were not available, but later on there was no reason, so far as he was concerned, why the German proportion should not be much higher and, indeed, up to the full proportion of the German population in any given area. This measure had not been discussed with Herr Henlein, but when seeing him last September Dr. Hodza had told him that the German population could obtain their self-administration *de facto* within the Constitution.

4. I asked whether he thought the Henlein party would be satisfied unless it had the appointment of the State as well as the local officials. Dr. Hodza explained that the former would be appointed by the Government, in which the Henlein party would themselves be represented so soon as they had made themselves eligible ('regierungsfähig'). The Government intended to solve the various German minority problems in order and to speed up the process. They had received a satisfactory reply to their intimation that they wished to keep the Henlein party informed and he would be seeing their representatives next week. He told me in confidence that the President had been originally opposed to co-operation with Herr Henlein, but that some two months ago he had explained to him that he must accept the idea of eventually admitting the Henlein party into the Government.

5. As regards local elections, Dr. Hodza told me that at the time of his interview with Herr Henlein in September it had been arranged that they should be held as they fell due. They would not have been, as I had thought, trial elections, but would have taken place in the various localities at different times and would have been more or less completed between October and February. Herr Henlein had observed that his party would win them all, and Dr. Hodza had impressed upon him the importance of pursuing a sensible and moderate policy in order to show the Czechs who were opposed

to the holding of early elections that the Henlein party was a responsible element and that the republic would not suffer as a result of its gaining power. Unfortunately, a serious incident took place at Teplice. There was evidence then that Germans from the Reich had plans for stirring up trouble and the elections had to be postponed. The explanation that they could not subsequently be held in 1938 because it was a jubilee year was, of course, fictitious. The real ground was that local elections would be misused to raise other issues (would be, as Dr. Hodza actually said in German, 'verpolitisiert'). At the same time, he hinted that it might be possible to hold local elections during the present year. In reply to some observation of mine, he said that, of course, great excitement now prevailed amongst the Sudeten Germans and it was fully understood that the atmosphere there must necessarily be highly charged. The urge to German nationalism and unification which had been growing for the last century and more was indeed now reaching its culminating point. All this he realised, and the Sudeten residents would have full freedom of speech but not freedom to beat each other up ('Redefreiheit aber keine Prügelfreiheit').

6. The Government were also trying to revise and unify all the provisions relating to minority matters which were to be found at present in a variety of laws and decrees. There was, for example, something on the subject in the Constitution and there were also a language law and various administrative decrees. The proposal was to consolidate them all into a kind of minority statute.

7. I suggested to Dr. Hodza that in the present circumstances it was not enough to make concessions, but that it was equally if not more important to make them known. He then repeated what Dr. Benes had said, that he would probably make a statement on the subject in Parliament in the early future. He felt, however, that the statement would have more effect if by the time it was made he could announce that certain steps in the direction indicated had already been taken.

8. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.

B. C. NEWTON

No. 104

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*

*No. 68 [R 3269/94/67]*

PRAGUE, *March 22, 1938*

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 67<sup>1</sup> of to-day's date, I have the honour to inform you that the Prime Minister, Dr. Hodza, spoke to me as follows on external affairs.

<sup>1</sup> No. 103.



2. The present international situation, with a weak and divided France and British rearmament incomplete, was a great temptation and encouragement for the radical elements in Germany. They were determined to exploit the situation in order to establish German influence on a firm foundation in the Danube Basin and, if Czechoslovakia seemed to stand in the way, it would only be a matter of time before she was attacked. The problem was, in Dr. Hodza's opinion, how to give Germany legitimate satisfaction in that area and yet save the countries concerned, namely Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia from being converted into mere colonies. It was important to act quickly and some large measure of international pacification was required.

3. When I tried to extract what he had specifically in mind, Dr. Hodza adverted to the plan which bears his name. I pointed out that the difficulty here seemed to be to convince Germany that it would be worth her while to co-operate. As he had himself indicated, she felt that she had the ball at her feet, so why should she accept a plan which would limit her influence? Dr. Hodza still seemed to think that something could be done. He said that Germany badly needed the agricultural produce from the Danube area and must in exchange increase her exports of manufactured goods. He wished, therefore, informally and unofficially to ask me to ascertain what were the British exports and interests in that region to which we attached the chief importance. He desired to safeguard our existing proportion, or perhaps amount, of trade and the interests which were of primary importance to us in those markets, his idea being, so far as I could elicit it, to see how favourable an offer could be made to Germany. In order, however, to elucidate the Prime Minister's unofficial enquiry and make it as specific as possible, I suggested that the Commercial Attaché should discuss the matter in greater detail with the Head of the Economic Branch of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to which suggestion Dr. Hodza cordially agreed.

4. He said that the United States Government had recently accepted what he called the Danube Clause, that is to say, a conditional waiver of their most-favoured-nation rights, and he was satisfied with the explanation of the attitude of His Majesty's Government given to him by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin not long ago. He realised that Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's conversation had been unofficial, but he evidently believed that His Majesty's Government would in fact be ready to waive their most-favoured-nation rights. I told him that, without having refreshed my memory on the subject, my understanding was that if His Majesty's Government were prepared to make this concession to the Danube States, they would not be willing to extend it to Germany, not of course because the country was Germany, but because it was a Great Power. I understood from Dr. Hodza that, in his opinion, this latter question would not in practice arise. He said he thought there was perhaps a misunderstanding, because the waiver would only apply to agricultural produce and raw materials and not to industrial products, of which German exports would consist.

5. Failing some plan, Germany would dominate South-Eastern Europe,

not only economically, but politically, so that the problem was, as mentioned at the beginning of this despatch, how to save the countries concerned from becoming mere colonies or satellites of Germany, bound to accept and support her foreign policy.

6. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

No. 105

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

No. 339 [R 3043/137/3]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 22, 1938*

Sir,

Dr. Woermann called upon Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 14th March and left the memorandum of which a translation is attached. Dr. Woermann said that he had been instructed by his Government to draw the attention of His Majesty's Government to the account of recent events in Austria which had been given by his Government and which did not correspond to the news which we seemed to have received from our Legation in Vienna. He asked what was the source of the latter information.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan reminded Dr. Woermann that he himself had been present when the Prime Minister had read two telegrams to Herr von Ribbentrop, and he would remember the contents of those telegrams. His Majesty's Government had received information from various sources, all pointing in the same direction. It seemed clear that ultimata had been presented with time limits attached and that those time limits had in fact been observed under the threat of German military action. Dr. Woermann repeated that the ultimata did not emanate from Berlin. He said that he understood that statements would be made that afternoon in Parliament, and he trusted that we should not give any account based on unreliable information. Sir Alexander Cadogan replied that it would be necessary to depict the course of events as reported to us from sources that we considered reliable, though he knew that it was the intention at the same time to read out the text of Baron von Neurath's reply to our note of protest. In that way he thought that justice would be done to the point of view of the German Government, who could not complain that we had endeavoured to suppress what they maintained was the correct account of what had happened.

3. Dr. Woermann said there was another point to which he wished to draw attention and that was the appearance of certain statements and articles in the British press. He said that he hoped that what had happened in Austria would soon blow over, that the excitement in this country would subside and that we should return to a normal state of affairs. Sir Alexander Cadogan replied that he felt bound to tell Dr. Woermann that in his opinion he was far too optimistic. He was aware that recently I myself had made

certain efforts to tone down press comments in this country, but it was to be feared that what had now happened would render all those efforts unavailing. In present circumstances it was, Sir Alexander Cadogan feared, inevitable that there should be strong opinion in many quarters in this country and that it would be quite useless to try to prevent this.

4. Dr. Woermann repeated that this was very regrettable and he hoped it would not reach a point at which it would affect unfavourably the prospects of reconciliation between our two countries. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that he fully shared Dr. Woermann's regret. It was indeed unfortunate that all this should have occurred at a moment when conditions appeared favourable for the improvement of relations. But it was no use being blind to the facts, and, as Sir Alexander Cadogan saw it, the principal fact was that what had occurred had aroused a measure of indignation in this country, that the attitude in regard to Anglo-German rapprochement would be found to have changed, and that it was no use thinking that we stood exactly where we did a week ago.

5. Dr. Woermann's particular complaint about Press messages referred to the passage in the Press Association message of March 12th (mentioned in the annexed memorandum), which he showed to Sir Alexander Cadogan. It was there stated that Herr von Ribbentrop's attitude in the conversations had been 'disappointing', and reported that conversations on the colonial question had followed. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that in any case His Majesty's Government were not responsible for the Press Association message. He was not aware that Herr von Ribbentrop's attitude in regard to the Anglo-German conversations had been considered 'disappointing', though Dr. Woermann must know that there had been a difference of opinion between the British Ministers and Herr von Ribbentrop on the subject of Austria.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 105

*Note for Conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan*  
(Translation)

The Reichs Minister for Foreign Affairs instructed me before his departure to discuss the following question with Lord Halifax or Sir Alexander Cadogan:

1. The British press continues to publish a version of events according to which the German Government is alleged to have delivered one, or more than one, ultimatum to Schuschnigg. This information was also contained in the telegrams, apparently from the British Legation in Vienna, which the Prime Minister read to Herr von Ribbentrop after lunch on the 11th March. I can only repeat that this information is not correct. Schuschnigg gave way to pressure from his own Cabinet and not to an ultimatum from Berlin. I would nevertheless be grateful if it were possible to give me particulars of the source of the information in the possession of the British Government to the effect that an ultimatum had been delivered. On the German side also

attempts are being made to clear up this question. In any case I would be very grateful if, in the statements to be made to-day in the House of Lords and House of Commons, account were taken of the fact that such an ultimatum was not delivered by Germany.

2. The Minister was astonished and disappointed at the news which appeared in the British press regarding the conversations held between him and the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax. These reports, at least in so far as they do not concern the present problem of Austria, are not in conformity with the agreement which was arrived at to maintain secrecy. I refer in particular to the message of the Press Association dated March 12th in which it is said, among other things, that the attitude of Herr von Ribbentrop had been extremely disappointing. Details of the conversations regarding the colonial question then followed.

The Minister did not gain from his conversations, including the last conversation with Lord Halifax which took place late on Friday afternoon, the impression that his talks with the British Government had led to disappointment. He is therefore unable to understand why the impression is now being created in English public opinion that he does not desire an understanding. He also asks that Lord Halifax and the Prime Minister should be told once more that, in so far as they did not deal with the Austrian problem, he derived an excellent impression from the conversations. He was particularly glad that the Prime Minister, after luncheon on Friday, gave him a 'message' to the Führer, and he is convinced that this will fall on fertile ground. Herr von Ribbentrop did not gain from the talks the impression that there was intransigence on the British side: on the contrary, he found 'openmindedness and friendliness', and he reported to the Führer that Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax honestly desired an understanding with Germany. As the Führer said in his interview with Ward Price 'No change on our side'.

3. The reasons why the plebiscite fixed by Schuschnigg was not only a violation of the Berchtesgaden agreements, but would not have guaranteed an impartial plebiscite, have now been so often cited in the proclamation of the Führer, in his speech at Linz, in the statement published by the German Embassy, and in the German reply to the English note of protest, that I need not repeat them again. It is now the intention of the Führer to have a really secret and impartial plebiscite carried out on the 10th April.

LONDON, 14 March, 1938.

No. 106

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 581 [C 1933/132/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 22, 1938

Sir,

I transmit to you, under cover of the present despatch, a memorandum in which I have set forth, for the strictly confidential information of the

French Government, the manner in which His Majesty's Government view the situation created by the absorption of Austria in the German Reich, and the conclusions which they would draw in view of the possibility of German action in Czechoslovakia similar to that taken in Austria.

2. On receipt of further instructions from me, but not before, you should speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the sense of the enclosed memorandum. You may, if he so desires, leave a copy of it with him as an informal record of what you have said.

3. In introducing your remarks, and in the course of them, you should emphasise the importance which His Majesty's Government attach to close collaboration between the two Governments and their conviction that in their continued collaboration in the pursuit of the ideals which they equally share lies the best hope of establishing peace and confidence in Europe.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN No. 106

The French Government have recently, on a number of occasions, reaffirmed in public the obligations they have assumed towards Czechoslovakia, and have asserted that those obligations would be faithfully carried out if the need arose. M. Delbos, when Foreign Minister, was good enough to explain to the Prime Minister and the late Foreign Secretary, during his visit to London with M. Chautemps in November last, his conception of the operation of the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty of 1925 in such an event. M. Delbos said that if there were no act of aggression the treaty would not come into operation, but, if there were armed intervention by Germany, it was evident that the treaty would apply. He observed that, in practice, the matter would depend upon the gravity of the facts. The incursion of one or two armed men over the frontier would not necessarily mean aggression. But if the aggression were real, whatever form it took, the treaty would apply. Again, on the 15th March, the French Ambassador, in a conversation with Lord Halifax, said that the latter would have seen the statements made by M. Delbos a few days previously as to the immediate action France would take in the event of any aggression being perpetrated on Czechoslovakia.

2. His Majesty's Government have given anxious consideration to the situation created by the incorporation of Austria in the German Reich, and, in particular, to the possibility of German action in Czechoslovakia similar to that already taken in Austria. They fully share the preoccupations of the French Government at the present time, and although neither the French Government nor the Czechoslovak Government have requested from them any declaration of the attitude they would adopt in the event of an unprovoked attack being made upon Czechoslovakia, His Majesty's Government have carefully reviewed their present commitments in the light of the present situation, and have earnestly considered whether it is in their power to give any further undertaking which might help to stabilise the position in Europe.

3. The French Government are, of course, aware of the extent of the



undertakings by which His Majesty's Government are at present bound. Their obligations to Czechoslovakia are those of one member of the League to another. His Majesty's Government maintain, and intend to maintain, their membership of the League, and will do their best to fulfil their obligations as a member of the League, within the measure of their capacity, and to the extent to which common action can be secured. His Majesty's Government have acknowledged that in present circumstances the ability of the League to fulfil all the functions originally contemplated for it is reduced; but this is not to be interpreted as meaning that His Majesty's Government would in no circumstances intervene as a member of the League for the restoration of peace or the maintenance of international order if circumstances were such as to make it appropriate for them to do so. The French Government will remember that the late Foreign Secretary, in his speech<sup>1</sup> at Leamington on the 20th November, 1936, defining the uses for which British arms might be employed, said that they might be used in bringing help to a victim of aggression in any case where, in our judgment, it would be proper under the provisions of the Covenant to do so.

4. The specific obligation of His Majesty's Government to France, apart from the obligation of one member of the League to another, is that contained in the Treaty of Locarno. This obligation was reaffirmed in the arrangement drawn up in London on the 19th March, 1936, and His Majesty's Government wish to take this opportunity once again to reaffirm that the obligations and guarantees undertaken by them as regards France in the Treaty of Locarno subsist in their entirety, and that they will accordingly come to the assistance of France in the event of an unprovoked act of aggression upon her by Germany. His Majesty's Government wish at the same time to inform the French Government that, with a view to making further arrangements as regards the technical conditions in which these obligations should be carried out in the case of unprovoked aggression, they propose at an early date to authorise confidential communications on a technical footing between the British and French Air Staffs. They will make a further communication to the French Government on this subject in due course.

5. These are the obligations which His Majesty's Government have assumed, and His Majesty's Government intend to abide by them. Those commitments are, in their view, no mean contribution to the maintenance of peace in Europe, and, though they have no intention of withdrawing from them, they cannot see their way to add to them. His Majesty's Government fully appreciate the anxieties of the French Government and their wish for further assurances, but they are confident that the French Government will appreciate in their turn the reasons which have always precluded this country from entering in advance into new and more extensive commitments in respect of the European continent. His Majesty's Government have frequently had occasion to state that, for reasons connected both with domestic politics and with their association with other parts of the British Commonwealth, which preclude His Majesty's Government from surrendering their

<sup>1</sup> For Mr. Eden's words see No. 114.

liberty of decision in advance, it is impossible for them to assume any further commitments in Europe beyond those embodied in the Treaty of Locarno and the Covenant of the League. In particular, as was stated by the Prime Minister to M. Chautemps and M. Delbos during their conversation in London on the 29th November last, His Majesty's Government could certainly not go so far as to state what their action might be in the event of an attack upon Czechoslovakia by Germany. They are accordingly not in a position to undertake an obligation in advance to render military assistance to France in cases and circumstances not covered by the Treaty of Locarno.

6. His Majesty's Government would not, however, pretend that, where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are alone involved, and that if war broke out it would be likely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. It would be quite impossible to say where it might end and what Governments might become involved. The inexorable pressure of facts, revealing threats to vital interests, might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements, and in that event it would be well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute, would almost immediately be involved. This is especially true in the case of two countries with long associations of friendship like Great Britain and France, which are devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty and are determined to uphold them.

7. In what has been said above, His Majesty's Government have naturally not had it in mind to offer advice to the French Government as to their own conduct in these matters, or to question their right to decide for themselves, if the case arose, whether or not their obligations to Czechoslovakia had become operative, and if so, in what manner those obligations should be fulfilled. But in considering what their own policy should be in the present situation, His Majesty's Government are entitled, and indeed bound, to review the position as they see it. And they would be lacking in the frankness which happily accompanies the complete confidence that marks the relationship between the two Governments, if they did not express to the French Government the misgivings which the present military situation arouses in their minds.

8. It is undeniable that the military position of Czechoslovakia has been seriously weakened by the incorporation of Austria in the Reich. The absence of fortifications along the former Czechoslovak-Austrian frontier lays the heart of Czechoslovakia open to German attack. There is little hope, therefore, that military operations against Germany by the two countries which have given Czechoslovakia pledges of assistance, namely, France and the Soviet Union, could be made effective in time to prevent the military occupation of Czechoslovakia if and when Germany decided to make an attack upon her. The restoration of Czechoslovakia would therefore have to await the conclusion of a victorious campaign against Germany by those who had taken up arms in Czechoslovakia's defence. The war in any case would be likely to be a long one, and if His Majesty's Government became engaged, they would not be in a position to contribute at the outset such forces as

would help to secure an early victorious conclusion. Their main contribution, in the early stages of the war, would be exercise of economic pressure by means of sea power, and this, as experience has shown, is slow in operation and tardy in its effects. His Majesty's Government do not press for any answer to the question which Lord Halifax put to M. Corbin on the 12th March as to what would, in the French view, be their method of rendering assistance to Czechoslovakia if the need arose; this is, however, a problem upon which His Majesty's Government have been reflecting, and they cannot say that the result of their reflections is encouraging.

9. His Majesty's Government feel, therefore, that every possible step should be taken both by the French Government and by His Majesty's Government to help remove the causes of friction or even of conflict by using their good offices with the Government of Czechoslovakia to bring about a settlement of questions affecting the position of the German minority. His Majesty's Government believe that it is possible to find such a solution of German minority questions as would be compatible with ensuring the integrity of the Czechoslovak State, while retaining that minority within the frontiers of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Government, in view of the relations of confidence which they enjoy with the French Government and His Majesty's Government, have never resented or questioned the interest taken by those two Governments in minority questions arising within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia. His Majesty's Government would therefore urge that this matter, along with the question of other steps that might be taken, is one for joint and early consideration between the two Governments. His Majesty's Government take this opportunity of assuring the French Government of the high importance which they attach to the closest collaboration between the two Governments, and of their conviction that in their continued collaboration in the pursuit of the ideals which they equally share lies the best hope of establishing peace and confidence in Europe.

#### No. 107

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 95 Telegraphic [C 1933/132/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 23, 1938*

My despatch No. 581<sup>1</sup> of March 22: Czechoslovakia.

We recognise that some disappointment will probably be felt by French Government at aide-mémoire which you have been instructed to present, and that they may be reluctant to accept our conclusions.

There are certain other arguments which we have hesitated to commit to paper, but which you may perhaps be able to use orally.

It has been urged, both in this country and in France, that, rather than to wait upon events, it would be better at once for France and Great Britain

<sup>1</sup> No. 106.

to indicate clearly that they would take action against Germany in the event of the latter being held to have violated Czechoslovak independence. As against that, it may be questioned whether any advantage is to be derived from uttering a warning against action which the German Government have declared that they do not contemplate. I do not wish to attach any undue value to the assurances given by Field-Marshal Göring regarding Czechoslovakia. At the same time, if we treat them as of no worth, would that not encourage the German Government to consider that they were entitled lightly to withdraw or to ignore them?

Our other objection to uttering a warning, or a threat, arises from our doubt as to our ability, or the ability of France and Great Britain combined, effectively to enforce it. Our effort in rearmament has been considerable, but we are only approaching the stage where production will give us a return on the expenditure on which we have embarked. Quite frankly, the moment is unfavourable, and our plans, both for offence and defence, are not sufficiently advanced.

We have dealt, in our aide-mémoire, with the precarious military situation of Czechoslovakia. We have not added the consideration that Germany now controls Czechoslovakia's only effective communication with the rest of the world and could easily establish an economic strangle-hold which, even without military action, could bring Czechoslovakia to her knees in a short time. Any reinforcement of the military guarantees which Czechoslovakia already enjoys might, in fact, therefore tempt Germany to achieve her object by means of economic pressure alone. We did not wish to set out the whole weakness of Czechoslovakia's position in a document which suggested that that country should make every effort to bring about a settlement of questions at issue with Germany. That would have suggested too plainly that Czechoslovakia was at a disadvantage in dealing direct with Germany. But it is a point which the French Government and His Majesty's Government should have in mind.

Finally, I should like to make it clear that, if a settlement is to be reached of the problem of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, it will be necessary at some stage to bring the German Government into the negotiation. In our aide-mémoire we have spoken of the French Government and His Majesty's Government 'using their good offices with the Government of Czechoslovakia to bring about a settlement of questions affecting the position of the German minority'.

His Majesty's Government do not doubt that the Czechoslovak Government will take all possible measures to do justice to their German minority. But evidently the establishment of good relations between Czechoslovakia and Germany depends on the latter being satisfied as to the régime provided by the Czechoslovak Government for that minority or at any rate being deprived of legitimate grievances in relation thereto. It will therefore, sooner or later, be necessary to approach the German Government in this matter. No mention is made in the aide-mémoire of any approach to Germany, as that can only come at a later stage. But if we ever reach that stage, I should

hope that the French Government would not be able to say that we had given them no warning that we contemplated bringing Germany into discussion, and I should be glad therefore if you would make it clear to them that in our view, if things go well, that will at some stage be inevitable.

You should still await further instructions before acting on my despatch No. 581 and on the present telegram.

**No. 108**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 96 Telegraphic [C 1933/132/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 23, 1938

You are now authorised to take action on my despatch No. 581<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 95<sup>2</sup> of March 22 and 23: Czechoslovakia.

If convenient, you should see Minister for Foreign Affairs this evening. If this is not convenient, you should see him as early as possible to-morrow. I should like the French Government to be in possession of our communication as long as possible in advance of statement of policy which is being made in Parliament on afternoon of March 24. One possible advantage of making communication to-morrow would be that it would in that event more or less synchronise with communication which His Majesty's Minister at Prague is being instructed to make to the Czechoslovak Government. Copy of the instructions which are being sent to him come to you by bag to-night.

If Minister for Foreign Affairs should suggest that French Government would have liked to be consulted by His Majesty's Government before latter came to decisions set forth in their aide-mémoire, your answer might be that had French Ministers come to London before His Majesty's Government had made up their minds, it would have been embarrassing for us; and that since His Majesty's Government could have come to no other decision than that which they have now reached, it would have been embarrassing for French Ministers to go back to Paris with nothing better for their pains.

Finally, you will, of course, impress on the French Government the necessity for keeping the terms of our communication secret, except in so far as they may be made public in statement of policy which is being made in Parliament to-morrow afternoon, March 24. In particular it is quite essential that there should be no leakage as regards air staff conversations.

<sup>1</sup> No. 106.

<sup>2</sup> No. 107.

**No. 109**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 603 [C 2033/132/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 23, 1938

Sir,

I saw the French Ambassador last night and had a long talk with him. His Excellency began by again expressing the great anxiety that the French



Government felt in regard to the present situation. They were, of course, immediately concerned about the position of Czechoslovakia, and in regard to that had made their position plain. They felt, however, that, important as Czechoslovakia was, the anxiety to which it gave rise was part only of a much larger tendency that was causing them acute disquiet. As they saw the European position, there was the greatest danger of the process that we had witnessed in Austria being continued by one means or other on the part of Germany with one country after another in Central and Eastern Europe, and resulting in a growing disinclination of these countries to make any stand against this sequence of events. The French Government could not clearly foresee where such a process would stop. No doubt difficulties might arise for the Germans if they tried to go too far by reason of domestic oppositions of various sorts that might be excited, but this would take time, and no great hopes could be entertained of any such process being able to stop the establishment by the German Government of a dominant position in Central Europe. In these circumstances the French Government thought that it was essential that those countries which did not wish to see this kind of development should make a very firm declaration and take a strong stand.

2. They did not expect Great Britain to give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia, but they were anxious to know where this country would stand if France became involved in war with Germany by reason of the operation of her own treaty with Czechoslovakia.

3. I said that Czechoslovakia was no doubt not the only thing that we all ought to be considering, but it was the immediate point of anxiety, and accordingly we had been giving to it very full examination. The Cabinet had as yet reached no final conclusions, although, as the Ambassador would be aware, a statement had to be made to Parliament to-morrow, and the Cabinet would, therefore, have to take their decision in time for that. I thought, however, that I could anticipate fairly accurately what the Cabinet decision would probably be, but his Excellency would appreciate that anything I said at this stage was not more than intelligent anticipation.

4. I then recapitulated the general argument in the communication to the French Government that we have since forwarded to your Excellency, emphasising to M. Corbin the difficulty in regard to the acceptance by this country of additional commitments, by reason of public opinion here and in the Dominions. He had said that his Government did not expect any guarantee in regard to Czechoslovakia. I thought that the Cabinet would also feel difficulty about giving undertakings in advance to France in the case that he had suggested, but that, of course, was not the whole story. I thought that we should probably feel able to say to the French Government that, whatever might be the formal pronouncements made by one Government to another, the inexorable drive of facts, once a war started, might be expected to be so strong that it was hard to say what country might not become involved. In such an event, both on account of our own vital interests as of our attachment to France, it was, as we fully recognised, probable that this country might be drawn in. I stated with some frankness

the military problem as we saw it that arose, and I told his Excellency that I felt there was a great difference of approach in these matters by the French and English minds. They were disposed, perhaps, to rate more highly than ourselves the value of strong declarations: we were naturally reluctant to make strong declarations unless we were in fact assured of being able to implement them should the need arise, and we hoped that, in the consultations with the French Government to which we looked forward, it might be possible to agree both upon a common course of action to be pursued at Prague in order to assist in the settlement of the particular Czechoslovak problem, as also upon the general policy that we might both seek to pursue together in face of the general European situation as it now existed. I told M. Corbin that I thought we should suggest that it would now be desirable that technical conversations should be held between the staffs of the respective Air Forces of the two countries, and I hoped that, on the whole, his Government would not be unduly disappointed with the decisions that we might reach or in the manner that we should seek to present them both to the French Government and to Parliament. M. Corbin said that he thought it would be very desirable that our military advisers should have the opportunity of exchanging views on the military problems, and, in regard to the general question, said that it would be of great reassurance to his Government if we were able to indicate that, not only was it possible, but also even probable, that, in the event of France being obliged to implement her obligations to Czechoslovakia, this country would come to her assistance.

5. As I was leaving, the Ambassador asked what we thought of the Russian note.<sup>1</sup> I told him that, if I might speak quite frankly, we did not think that it had any great value and we were rather disposed to feel that the Russian Government did not themselves feel that, in making it, they were making any great contribution to European peace. His Excellency said that he thought there might be an element of manoeuvre in the action of the Soviet Government.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> See No. 90.

## No. 110

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 42 Telegraphic [C 1933/132/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 23, 1938*

His Majesty's Government have anxiously considered the situation created by the recent German action in Austria, and in particular the possibility of similar action in Czechoslovakia. They have carefully reviewed their present commitments in the light of the new situation, and have considered whether it is in their power to extend them.

Though neither the French nor the Czechoslovak Government have asked

for any declaration of the attitude which His Majesty's Government would adopt in the event of an unprovoked attack on Czechoslovakia, they think it well to inform those Governments of the conclusions they have reached. His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris has been instructed to acquaint the French Government with the views of His Majesty's Government, and you should make an oral communication to the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, in strict confidence, as early as possible to-morrow, March 24, in the following sense:—

The obligations of Great Britain to Czechoslovakia are those of one member of the League to another. His Majesty's Government maintain, and intend to maintain, their membership of the League, and will do their best to fulfil their League obligations within the measure of their capacity and to the extent to which common action can be secured. His Majesty's Government have acknowledged that in present circumstances the ability of the League to fulfil all the functions originally contemplated for it is reduced, but this is not to be interpreted as meaning that His Majesty's Government will in no circumstances intervene as a member of the League for the maintenance of international order or the restoration of peace if circumstances were such as to make it appropriate for them to do so. I would recall in this connexion the declaration made by the former Foreign Secretary at Leamington on 20th November 1936.

So far as France is concerned, His Majesty's Government are bound by the obligations assumed in the Treaty of Locarno as reaffirmed in March 1936 to go to the assistance of France in the event of an unprovoked act of aggression upon her by Germany.

His Majesty's Government intend to abide by the above-mentioned obligations which are, in their view, no mean contribution to the maintenance of peace in Europe, and though they have no intention of withdrawing from them, they cannot see their way to add to them.

In view of the present situation, His Majesty's Government feel that in the interests of international peace every possible step should be taken to remove the causes of friction or even of conflict arising out of the present minority problem in Czechoslovakia, and they are confident that the Czechoslovak Government share this feeling. His Majesty's Government would be glad, at a later date, to exchange views with the Czechoslovak Government on this subject.

The Czechoslovak Government will, I am sure, believe that it is with the greatest regret that His Majesty's Government have been forced to the conclusion that they are unable to take any further direct and definite commitment in respect of Czechoslovakia. They will, however, I hope have confidence that His Majesty's Government, within the limits of their ability, will do everything to assist the Czechoslovak Government, who can be assured of their sympathy and goodwill towards a solution of their difficulties.

(Repeated to Paris, No. 58, Saving.)

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*

*No. 282 [C 2110/65/18]*

BERLIN, March 23, 1938

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of despatch No. 4 from the Military Attaché to this Embassy of the 23rd March, 1938, respecting increases in the German army.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 111

*Colonel Mason-MacFarlane to Sir N. Henderson*

*No. 4*

BERLIN, March 23, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to submit a brief preliminary note on the increases in the German army which we now have to anticipate.

I have previously called attention to the very definite statements regarding 'Verstärkung' (strengthening) of the German Wehrmacht made by Herr Hitler and by Generaloberst von Brauchitsch on, and just after, the 20th February. At the time I was inclined to believe that it was probable that the bulk of such 'strengthening' would be qualitative rather than quantitative.

Two occurrences have in the meantime intervened:—

(a) Orders have been issued regarding the classes of recruits to be called up for army service in October 1938 and in October 1939.

(b) The Austrian army has been incorporated in the German army.

2. According to the calculations which I have been able to make from data at my disposal, I estimate that the total number of peace effectives in the German army (excluding the Austrian army) will be increased by approximately 100,000 men as from October 1938. From October 1939 the number will be increased by yet another 100,000. I am not yet prepared to vouch absolutely for the accuracy of these figures, but it may be noted that two of my most reliable colleagues, working independently of each other and of myself, have arrived at precisely the same estimate.

There is as yet no evidence to show how it is proposed to incorporate this large additional number of effectives in the German army. There is no indication at present that there is to be an increase in the total number of divisions in connexion with the recent appearance of new Army Corps Headquarters. There is room for the formation of many units, such as army troops and corps troops units, mechanised units, frontier units and fortress units, without exceeding the number of thirty-six infantry divisions which Herr Hitler has declared to be his maximum peace requirement. On the other hand 200,000 men represent the man-power required for some twelve divisions

with their complement of army and corps troops at peace strength, and it now seems more than likely that we shall be faced with the appearance of new formations during 1938-39. It is, however, perfectly possible that a considerable proportion of the additional man-power soon to become available will be devoted to extra-infantry divisional formations or units, and that the remainder may be used for the production of new units within, and not without, the framework of the thirty-six divisions.

3. As regards the Austrian army, it is probable that, in accordance with the manifest intention to deal with Austria in exactly the same way as with the rest of Germany, the number of peace effectives to be maintained in Austria will be about 100,000. This figure bears approximately the same relation to the population of Austria as will the peace total of effectives in 1939 in Germany to the population of the German Reich.

4. I have been informed by the Reichskriegsministerium that it is intended to reorganise the Austrian army in two army corps and one mechanised formation. My Polish colleague, on the other hand, has been told that the reorganisation will take the form of three army corps and one mechanised formation. The discrepancy is probably at the moment immaterial. The probability is that, in addition to the mechanised formation, it is proposed to maintain six divisions, and it is perfectly possible that it has not yet been definitely decided whether to have two army corps of three divisions, or three army corps of two divisions. In either case, the total number of peace effectives would approximately tally with the figure of 100,000 at which I arrived above.

5. Speaking broadly, we may therefore reckon that within the next two years the number of peace effectives in the army of 'Great Germany' will rise to a figure some 300,000 greater than that of the army of the Third Reich prior to the annexation of Austria.

6. The provision of officers and n.c.os. for the 'Austrian' army presents no immediate difficulty. They already exist. The provision of officers and n.c.os. for any fresh formations and units of the remainder of the German army will be no easy task. It has been difficult enough to meet demands up to date, and the quality of the supply has been very varying.

It is, however, the provision of armament and equipment for the programme of expansion that will almost certainly prove the limiting factor in regard to what can and what cannot be completed satisfactorily. The rearmament of the army of the Third Reich is as yet in many respects incomplete. It is reasonably certain that it will be the intention to rearm and equip the 'Austrian' army on the German model, and to relegate the bulk of the present armament and equipment of the 'Austrian' army to the 'Austrian' Landwehr, as has been done in Germany. This rearmament will throw an additional strain on the German armament industry, which will probably be compensated only in part by the undoubtedly valuable addition to its ranks of such establishments as the Vienna Arsenal, Böhler and the other Styrian iron and steel works, Steyr and Hirtenberg.

7. I have drawn, in rather bold washes, a picture of the expansion with



which we are likely to be faced, and some of the factors affecting its evolution. We can reasonably hope to commence receiving indications in the near future which will help us to fill in some detail.

I have, &c.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE, *Colonel*  
*Military Attaché*

## No. 112

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 24, 2.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 97 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 2004/132/18]*

PARIS, March 24, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I opened as instructed in your despatch No. 581<sup>2</sup> and then read to Minister for Foreign Affairs a French translation of memorandum therein enclosed and handed him English text, urging very confidential nature of this oral communication except in so far as certain points may be mentioned in Prime Minister's statement in Parliament to-day, and in particular proposed staff talks regarding air.

2. I then spoke in the sense of your telegram No. 95.<sup>3</sup>

3. M. Boncour thanked me warmly for my communication and promised to study very carefully memorandum which would be most useful and valuable. He will reply fully in due course.

4. Meanwhile His Excellency made the following preliminary observations.

5. M. Boncour reciprocates the conviction of His Majesty's Government that close collaboration between Great Britain and France is essential but maintains his belief that a definite warning to Germany by the two countries regarding consequence of aggression on Czechoslovakia would be the best means of avoiding war. He said that in the event of such aggression by Germany, France would only act within the framework of Article XVI of the Covenant, viz. she would immediately summon the Council: an attack by France therefore against the Rhineland in fulfilment of her obligations to Czechoslovakia could not be considered as an act of aggression by her. (Incidentally this would be the French method of assisting Czechoslovakia and was the reply to question you put to M. Corbin on March 12.)<sup>4</sup>

6. Replying to my argument regarding insufficient state of our re-armament, M. Boncour pointed out that time was not on our side, for Germany by each successive act of aggression, was getting stronger and stronger, until she would finally attain complete hegemony in Europe. This was great danger for our two countries, for so far as immediate future was concerned France was quite secure behind her Maginot line.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram stated that Sir E. Phipps had taken action according to his instructions in Nos. 106-8.

<sup>2</sup> No. 106.

<sup>3</sup> No. 107.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 62.

7. M. Boncour would not admit that Marshal Göring's assurances had any value.

8. Regarding minorities in Czechoslovakia; His Excellency said they were already treated better than in any other countries and that he had received renewed assurances on this point only yesterday from M. Benes. He agreed that Great Britain and France should continue to give counsels of moderation at Prague but not in public as that would only encourage Herr Hitler to increase his demands like he did in Austria when latter's acceptance of his most monstrous demands had shown him that she stood alone and unprotected.

9. Finally M. Boncour strongly objects to France and Great Britain approaching Germany even later on regarding minorities in Czechoslovakia. He declares that this would be a terribly dangerous precedent for all countries with any German minorities and would moreover be resented by Czechoslovak Government itself.

### No. 113

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received March 25, 1938, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 55 Telegraphic [C 2051/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 24, 1938, 7.15 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me on March 24 that according to information now received from a variety of sources the number of German troops was being reduced rather than increased; that Czechoslovakia had no reason to fear a German attack in the immediate future. (Similar view was expressed to Military Attaché by General Staff this morning.)

Minister for Foreign Affairs believes such measures as had been originally taken along the Czechoslovak frontier were genuinely defensive and that Germany had been really uneasy lest mobilization by Czechoslovakia should provoke a general conflagration. He thought too that Germany had a healthy fear of Russian army and Russian air force.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Saving.

### No. 114

*Viscount Halifax to His Majesty's Representatives at Berlin, Paris, Washington, Prague, and Budapest*  
*Telegraphic<sup>1</sup> [C 2047/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, March 24, 1938

The following passage occurred in the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons this afternoon:—

<sup>1</sup> No. 107 to Berlin, No. 97 to Paris, No. 202 to Washington, No. 43 to Prague, No. 21 to Budapest. These telegrams were despatched at 8.0 p.m.

Speaking of questions that continue to cause anxiety, he said:—

‘Of these, the one necessarily most present to many minds is that concerning the relations between the Government of Czechoslovakia and the German minority in that country; and it is probable that the solution of this question, if it could be achieved, would go far to re-establish a sense of stability over an area much wider than that immediately concerned.

‘Accordingly, His Majesty’s Government have given special attention to this matter, and, in particular, they have fully considered the question whether the United Kingdom, in addition to those obligations by which she is already bound by the Covenant of the League and the Treaty of Locarno, should, as a further contribution towards preserving peace in Europe, now undertake new and specific commitments in Europe, and, in particular, such a commitment in relation to Czechoslovakia.

‘It is right that I should here remind the House what are our existing commitments which might lead to the use of our arms for purposes other than our own defence and the defence of territories of other parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations. They are, first of all, the defence of France and Belgium against unprovoked aggression, in accordance with our existing obligations under the Treaty of Locarno, as reaffirmed in the arrangement drawn up in London on 19th March, 1936. His Majesty’s Government have also obligations by treaty to Portugal, Iraq and Egypt. Those are our definite obligations in relation to particular countries. There remains another case in which we may have to use our arms, a case which is of a more general character, but which may have no less significance. This is the case arising under the Covenant of the League, which was accurately defined by the former Foreign Secretary, when he said:—

‘“In addition, our armaments may be used in bringing help to a victim of aggression in any case where, in our judgment, it would be proper under the provision[s] of the Covenant to do so.” Such a case might, for example, include Czechoslovakia, and the ex-Foreign Secretary went on to say: “I use the word ‘may’ deliberately, since in such an instance there is no automatic obligation to take military action. It is, moreover, right that this should be so for nations cannot be expected to incur automatic military obligations save for areas where their vital interests are concerned.”

‘His Majesty’s Government stand by these declarations. They have acknowledged that in present circumstances the ability of the League to fulfil all the functions originally contemplated for it is reduced; but this is not to be interpreted as meaning that His Majesty’s Government would in no circumstances intervene as a member of the League for the restoration of peace or the maintenance of international order if circumstances were such as to make it appropriate for them to do so. And I cannot but feel that the course and development of any dispute, should such unhappily arise, would be greatly influenced by the knowledge that such action as it may be in the power of Great Britain to take, will be determined by His

Majesty's Government of the day in accordance with the principles laid down in the Covenant.

'The question now arises whether we should go further. Should we forthwith give assurance to France that, in the event of her being called upon by reason of German aggression on Czechoslovakia to implement her obligations under the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty, we would immediately employ our full military force on her behalf? Or, alternatively, should we at once declare our readiness to take military action in resistance to any forcible interference with the independence and integrity of Czechoslovakia, and invite any other nations, which might so desire, to associate themselves with us in such a declaration?

'From a consideration of these two alternatives it clearly emerges that under either of them the decision as to whether or not this country should find itself involved in war would be automatically removed from the discretion of His Majesty's Government, and the suggested guarantee would apply irrespective of the circumstances by which it was brought into operation, and over which His Majesty's Government might not have been able to exercise any control.

'This position is not one that His Majesty's Government could see their way to accept, in relation to an area where their vital interests are not concerned in the same degree as they are in the case of France and Belgium; it is certainly not the position that results from the Covenant. For these reasons His Majesty's Government feel themselves unable to give the prior guarantee suggested.

'But, while plainly stating this decision, I would add this: Where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are not alone involved, and, if war broke out, it would be unlikely to be confined to those who have assumed such obligations. It would be quite impossible to say where it might end and what Governments might become involved. The inexorable pressure of facts might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements, and in that event it would be well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute, would almost immediately be involved. This is especially true in the case of two countries like Great Britain and France, with long associations of friendship, with interests closely interwoven, devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty, and determined to uphold them.'

#### No. 115

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*

*No. 286 [C 2113/132/18]*

BERLIN, March 24, 1938

My Lord,

The incorporation of Austria in the German Reich is an accomplished fact. Events have moved so fast since the 10th March and have been so fully

reported upon by telegraph and despatch from this post and Vienna that a chronological account of them would seem superfluous. On the other hand, there are lessons to be learnt from the experiences of the past fortnight.

2. It has, above all, been brought home to us with greater force than ever before—since Austria is Hitler's first adventure outside the actual frontiers of the Reich itself—how precarious is to-day the peace of the world when it rests in the hands of a single fanatical and unbalanced individual whose reactions are arbitrary and personal.

3. Somewhere it has been written that 'the resentment of a petty mind can ruin an enterprise which would have profited an empire.' The reflection provokes still greater anxiety when it concerns the resentments of a man wielding the immense power and possessing the vast capacity for harm which Hitler does. Moreover, apart from resentments, Hitler's is, in other respects, no petty mind. He may be a pathological subject, an introvert, a mystic or anything else which one may choose to call him, but, in addition to all that, there is no doubt that he is a constructive genius. There is no other explanation of his amazing rise to power. The question as to how he did it can only be answered by the fact that he has done it. Nor can one deny that the achievements of his first five years have been stupendous. By that constructive genius, by his Germanic faith and by his hitherto infallible instinct for choosing the right course and the right moment for taking it, he has become the unquestioned and supreme ruler of a nation of 75 million highly disciplined, very efficiently organised and ruthless Germans, who, as Field-Marshal von Blomberg himself said to me a few months ago, would march to the North Pole if ordered by Hitler to do so.

4. If, having regard to his achievements, one must take Hitler's genius and strength for granted, the weaknesses of this temperamental dictator are more obvious. Probably the most dangerous is his liability to uncontrollable resentment. It is at the back of his treatment of the Jews and his sensitiveness to British press criticism arouses it. The latest instance of it has been the case of Austria. It was never, I am quite convinced, his intention to rape that country as he has done. Had it been otherwise he could have made such impossible conditions at Berchtesgaden as would there and then have compelled Dr. Schuschnigg to resign or face the consequences of refusal. He gave Schuschnigg, however, a last chance, because his original design was to undermine Austria from within, not violate her from without. It is, of course, true that plans had for a long time past been prepared for military intervention, but only against the possibility of a Nazi rising in Austria which might result in bloodshed. In such event it has always been his expressed intention to intervene 'like lightning,' as he himself said to me on the 3rd March. But it was not till the 10th March, after Dr. Schuschnigg's speech at Innsbruck, that he resolved to act *before* there had been bloodshed, and in such force as to ensure that there would be none. The decisive motive for that resolution was his resentment; on this occasion against the unfortunate Dr. Schuschnigg for what Hitler regarded as the former's breach of the Berchtesgaden agreement.



5. As a matter of fact I think it is unfair to put the entire blame on Schuschnigg. Hitler has not been normal since his resentment over his treatment by Field-Marshal von Blomberg. The more I learn of the inner course of events, the more am I confirmed in the view I have consistently held that the domestic crisis and changes at the beginning of February were nothing but a smoke screen to conceal Hitler's discomfiture over the Blomberg marriage. In a sense everything, including Austria, which has occurred since that date can largely be attributed to that unlucky incident.

6. Be that as it may and having once made up his mind, Hitler was carried away by the momentum of the operation which he had initiated, by the facility with which it was accomplished, by the lack of anything but verbal opposition to it, and by the enthusiasm—however fictitious or misguided—by which he himself and the German troops were greeted on their arrival in Austria. I do not believe that on the 11th March Hitler himself envisaged the complete assimilation of Austria to the German Reich. Until the 13th March he still contemplated an Austria which should be Nazi governed but preserve a simulacrum of independence, and I would be greatly surprised if Dr. Seyss-Inquart to-day is not a gravely disillusioned man at finding himself but the governor of a German province instead of the Chancellor of an independent Nazi Austria.

7. Though I may be wrong, it seems to me that it is in the interest of the correctness of future decisions in regard to Hitler's actions and intentions, to endeavour to form a true judgment of the motives which inspired him in any given instance. There never was any doubt as to his fixed determination to incorporate Austria in some form or other in the great Germany of his dreams. But when the moment came on the 11th March his action was, I firmly believe, quite unpremeditated, except in general principle, and was inspired solely by a fit of uncontrollable resentment. It is this fact which I wish to emphasise, since it is to such fits, *mutatis mutandis*, Europe in general and Czechoslovakia in particular may be exposed in future. I would add, in this connexion, that we would do well to accept as definite Hitler's statements as to his intentions. He had never concealed his determination to unite Germany and Austria, and he has given us full warning as regards Czechoslovakia. We cannot disregard that warning, and if a peaceable solution is to be achieved we should lose no time in considering how it can be achieved.

8. A second obvious lesson to be learnt from the fate of Austria is the futility of forcible protests unbacked by force or the fear of force. Experience has taught Hitler that only by jungle law can he achieve his objectives, and I hope that by now experience will have taught the rest of Europe that jungle law can only be restrained by measures equivalent to it. It follows therefrom that if we are to intervene in future with any prospect of success in the affairs of Central Europe we must either forestall developments by remedial action, having regard to the forces of evolution, or be prepared to support our right of intervention by adequate military strength.

9. A third and even more obvious moral is the fact that nothing succeeds

like success. In his speech on the 18th March Hitler was able to refer to the sympathetic attitude adopted in the Austrian crisis, not only by Italy but by Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia. The three last are still members of the League of Nations, and their haste in welcoming the rape of their fellow-member Austria is sadly symptomatic of many things. However immoral Germany's next action may be, it would be the height of unwisdom to count on the co-operation of a single small Power in Europe against her. Nor would I except Czechoslovakia in the unlikely event of such next action being directed against any other country than herself. It is tragic that the League of Nations and collective security should be reduced to such a pass, but it is nevertheless the case. It was, I believe, a German philosopher who wrote that in the world self-interests are always warring with ideals; that interests always prevail in the present but ideals in the end. So may it be with Geneva. What, however, matters at the moment is that German hegemony east of the Rhine, down to the Brenner and the Balkans in the south and as far as the Russian frontier in the east, is a fact, however unpalatable it may be to admit it. Moreover, from the point of view of world peace it would be wiser to recognise now the fact in one's mind and to leave the remedy to the disease itself.

10. The final moral which I would draw from recent events is the strength of the Nazi movement. However unpopular it doubtless is with the upper and middle classes, with the older folk and the dispossessed, its appeal to the young is tremendous. I venture to think that one of Schuschnigg's greatest mistakes was in this respect. Had he been allowed to hold his plebiscite I do not doubt that he might have secured 70 per cent. of the votes, but the remaining 30 per cent. would have represented the youth of the nation, and it is youth which is prepared to do and dare. I shall be surprised if at the plebiscite on the 10th April the Nazis fail to secure 90 per cent., since age does not dare and the mass of a people, such as the Austrian, is prepared to run in whatever direction it is driven. Moreover, it is, if I might venture a prophecy, the Austrian youth, together with a greatly improved economy, who will in time make of Austria a quite contented Gau or province of the German Reich. For whatever happens, Hitler will always have behind him the enthusiastic youth of the German nation. After Hitler, and once normalcy is restored, Germany may change her face again, but so long as he is there, with Goebbels and the radio behind him, the threat of foreign intervention before him and an army ready to do whatever it is told, Central and Eastern Europe will in general have to dance as Hitler pipes.

I have, &c.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

[C 1935/95/62]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 24, 1938*

Your Excellency,

In continuation of my note of the 22nd March,<sup>1</sup> I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that I have now read, and considered with great care, the text of M. Litvinov's statement to representatives of the press in Moscow, a translation of which you were so good as to communicate to me in your note of the 17th March.

2. I note that this statement may be held to represent the point of view of the Soviet Government in regard to present international problems. I assume the substance of the Soviet Government's proposal to be that arrangements should be made immediately for a discussion to take place between the interested Governments with a view to determine the practical measures required in order to check the further development of aggression, and to counteract so far as possible the increasing danger of war.

3. His Majesty's Government would warmly welcome the assembly of an international conference, at which it might be expected that all European States would consent to be represented, and where it might therefore be found possible to discuss in a friendly manner, and perhaps finally to settle, such matters as are thought most likely to endanger peace. In present circumstances, however, it would not appear that such a meeting could be arranged. A conference only attended by some of the European Powers, and designed less to secure the settlement of outstanding problems than to organise concerted action against aggression, would not necessarily, in the view of His Majesty's Government, have such a favourable effect upon the prospects of European peace.

4. In these circumstances, while sincerely grateful to the Soviet Government for having communicated to me their views on the best course to be adopted to ensure the preservation of peace, I regret that His Majesty's Government cannot accept in their entirety the suggestions put forward by M. Litvinov in his statement under reference. The views of His Majesty's Government are being further elaborated in Parliament, and you will observe from the relevant statements of policy by His Majesty's Ministers that, though there may be a difference of opinion regarding the methods to be adopted, His Majesty's Government are no less anxious than the Soviet Government to find effective means of strengthening the cause of peace.

I have, &amp;c.,

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This note acknowledged M. Maisky's communication in No. 90.

## No. 117

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*

*No. 40 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2147/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 25, 1938

My telegram No. 53.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs assured me that Czechoslovak Government asked nothing of His Majesty's Government. They realised how difficult it was for Great Britain to extend its commitments and were quite satisfied with British sympathy and understanding. One or two subsequent remarks of Minister for Foreign Affairs show that Czechoslovak Government rely on their French alliance and eventual British support for France.

During brief informal meeting with the President later in the day M. Benes told me that he looked forward to a growing recognition of identity of interest of Great Britain and Czechoslovakia in resisting German aggression.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris Saving.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton stated that he had carried out the instructions sent to him in No. 110.

## No. 118

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 26)*

*No. 41 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2180/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, March 25, 1938

In a brief conversation which I had March 24 with M. Benes at a reception, he alluded as had previously Minister for Foreign Affairs to indications that German Army were not yet ready for war and itself realized the fact. M. Benes agreed, however, with my comment that there remained none the less the danger that party fanatics might take the bit between their teeth so that great caution was necessary.

As regards Activists' secession<sup>1</sup> I reminded President, as I had already the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that he and Dr. Krofta had often told me that relations between the Government and Henlein party were complicated by the fact that Government could not sacrifice their Activist supporters. They are both inclined to agree that although Activist defection is a rebuff it will simplify the situation and perhaps thereby facilitate negotiations. Dr. Krofta for example told me Activists had sometimes abused their position by demanding appointment for unsuitable candidates.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> For these developments, see No. 97, note 3.

No. 119

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received March 30)*

*No. 155 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2237/132/18]*

BERLIN, *March 29, 1938*

The Chancellor's speech last night was concerned mainly with the political and social theory of National Socialism. There were a few jeers at foreign journalism and at the close he gave again a review of his actions in Austria, according to the now accepted official version.

The only real interest attached to his twice repeated mention of the figure of ten millions for the number of Germans arbitrarily separated from the Reich by the Peace Treaties, when the Hapsburg dissolution plainly pointed (and they demanded) their incorporation. Coupled with this he specifically mentioned 6½ million Austrians in an immediately following passage. Finally after describing the circumstances which rendered it imperative to act when he did, the Chancellor said:

'The situation could not be tolerated indefinitely. Germany is on the rise and is becoming continually greater and prouder and more self-respecting. Is it to be wondered at that these people looked more and more with burning eyes to Germany and thronged more and more round the loud speakers to hear what was happening in Germany? They had one hope—"Germany must save us". One can understand that these people's hatred of the oppressor grew and that Germany could not look on while German people were tormented on her borders.

'I have said this and no one should ("soll") pretend to be surprised. I have given warning and declared publicly that Germany *cannot* be and *will not* be indefinitely a spectator of the oppression of her fellow-countrymen. No honourable people *can* do that—no State which respects itself—and we [have] no intention of doing it for ever. . . .'

This passage is not referred to in the short official summary of the speech. The reference to Czechoslovakia is very thinly veiled. (Underlining<sup>1</sup> is mine.)

Repeated to Prague, Paris, and Vienna.

<sup>1</sup> The words underlined in the original text are here printed in italics.

No. 120

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 1)*

*No. 85 [C 2340/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *March 29, 1938*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned document.



*Memorandum by H.M. Military Attaché, Prague, on the Military Position in Czechoslovakia resulting from the German Occupation of Austria*

1. *General remarks.* The opinions expressed in this memorandum, apart from those acquired from previous experience, are based on conversations which I have had with the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, the 1st Assistant Chief of the General Staff, the Heads of the 2nd and 3rd Bureaux and Officers of the Liaison section at the Ministry of National Defence. It may be mentioned at the outset that from the moment the news of the march into Austria was received, and up to the present time, there has been no sign of panic or undue alarm either at the Ministry of National Defence, among the troops or with the population of the country at large. No special precautionary measures of a Military nature, such as the calling up of reservists or the movements of Units, have taken place, other than a slight increase in the permanent garrison of the frontier defences and the drafting of a few small bodies of men to reinforce the frontier guards for the purpose of controlling refugees from Austria. It was particularly desired to avoid any action which might be construed as provocative.

2. *General Staff view on the present and future situation.*

The Military situation in Germany and Austria has of course been the subject of detailed and intensive study during the past week. The Czech Military Intelligence bureau is always very well informed in regard to all Military matters in neighbouring States, and particularly in Germany. There is a large and efficient secret service organization and I understand that since the crisis occurred a very large number of reports have been received from agents abroad, the collation of which has enabled the General Staff to acquire precise details, not only of the situation in Austria but of all troop movements in Germany itself. It is probable that the information received is for the most part accurate.

Appreciating the situation on the knowledge thus acquired the General Staff soon came to the conclusion that no attack on their own frontiers was to be expected for the present. The dispositions of the German Army taken in all its aspects did not indicate the possibility of such an attack, involving as it might do, a war of the first magnitude, although the movements of certain Units from places more or less distant towards the Czech frontier could hardly be attributed to normal routine. They concerned, however, only quite small forces. The positive assurances given by Field-Marshal Göring to the Czech Minister in Berlin and their repetition in Prague did, in my opinion, also add to the feeling of temporary security.

As regards the future, the General Staff are preparing for war in the definite belief that it will come and probably not in the far distant future. Although the Czechs will try to come to terms with Germany it seems probable from information recently received that no terms acceptable to both countries are possible since the Sudetendeutsch minority parties are tending

now to consolidate and co-operate with a programme involving their incorporation into the German Reich. Anything less than this the Government might be prepared to concede, under pressure, but I do not personally believe they would go as far as to renounce permanently the Sudeten minority of the people and the valuable areas they occupy. However this is a very vexed political question upon which it would be unwise to be too dogmatic. The General Staff profess outwardly to view the question in a less extreme light as if it could be resolved by making further concessions within the framework of the Republic, but the temper of the Sudetens within the last few days has been such as to preclude submission to half measures. Nazism has gone to their heads like wine.

It must be supposed that in spite of their outward calm the General Staff are fully alive in reality to the true significance of all that is passing in the frontier regions and they must therefore face the ultimate solution of war or surrender to impossible terms. As far as the Army is concerned, and I think the country too, war would be the choice as they are confident that with the aid of France and Russia and possibly ourselves they would, in the end, regain their land intact. I have been surprised to find little or no evidence that the assurances of these two countries, recently renewed, are seriously doubted in Military circles. The General Staff only hope to gain the time still required to complete their frontier defences and further perfect their readiness for war.

### *3. Strength and readiness for war of the Czech army.*

The Army has quite recently been organised into seven Corps comprising 17 Infantry Divisions and there are in addition four so-called 'Divisions rapides'. These consist of Cavalry (horsed), Cyclist battalions, Field artillery and some motorized Infantry. The Divisions are not all organized alike. The distribution of the Army is somewhat thicker in Bohemia and Moravia than in Slovakia and Ruthenia. Its general state of efficiency has been previously reported on and from the evidence I have collected from time to time I think it is probably the best in the smaller States of Europe, especially in regard to equipment and weapons. It is, however, not as ready for war as present circumstances demand as the process of replacing obsolescent arms with new models is still far from complete though it is now being pushed forward as quickly as possible. As regards the rapidity with which mobilization and concentration can be effected, it is impossible at present to obtain detailed and up to date information but the Assistant C.G.S. informed me that they realised that this was their most vital problem and were satisfied with the arrangements made to meet it. It is probable that one reserve Division per Corps will take the field. It is unfortunate for the Czechs that the Army of their only potential aggressor is more or less on a permanent war footing, for they are bound to lose valuable time in mobilizing however good their arrangements may be. The General Staff does, however, rely on its intelligence service to keep it informed of warlike activities beyond their frontiers which even the Germans can hardly forgo if they are to prepare for a possible first class war. In this connection I feel bound to record a doubt as to

whether the Czechs will, in fact, fight if their defences are overrun or turned at the outset and their mobilization is interfered with. No Czech will admit the possibility of not fighting, maintaining that the Army and Nation will do so to the last, but I have occasionally gained the impression that this may not be so under circumstances which preclude them from a fair start. If, on the other hand, they have time to get ready and are assured of support from France I believe they will stand. Rumania is expected to contribute usefully in course of time but Yugoslavia is now out of the reckoning.

#### 4. *Frontier defences.*

Such detailed knowledge of the frontier defences as is in our possession has already been reported. In conversations with members of the General Staff I have derived the impression that the fortifications on the old German frontier are already considered sufficiently strong to enable the Army to hold the enemy whilst mobilization is in process and, if France mobilizes instantly, involving thereby the presence of a large portion of the German Army on the Rhine, for an even longer period. In view of the increased aggressiveness of the Sudetendeutschen and the facilities they will have for sabotage on a large scale I am personally doubtful now as to the true efficiency of the defence which it will be possible to offer. There is no doubt that this danger has greatly augmented of late. The defences themselves, though still not entirely ready, are well constructed and planned and they cover every likely approach.

On the Austrian frontier things are less satisfactory and work is proceeding day and night to improve the situation. The mountains which, with certain gaps, form an almost continuous chain on the Silesian, Saxon and Bavarian frontiers only extend on the Austrian frontier to a point about 30 miles S.E. of C. Budejovice, which is due South of Prague; from this point to about Znojmo the country is undulating but fairly thickly wooded and from here onwards to the Hungarian boundary it is mostly flat, but there are rivers the whole way to Bratislava which are very definite obstacles. Moreover much of this sector is heavily wooded. There is little in the nature of forts on the Austrian frontier but likely approaches are for the most part commanded by concrete posts and earthworks. The Assistant C.G.S. considered that an attack on this sector by Armoured Forces could only be delayed temporarily but he certainly did not envisage the possibility of a clear run through.

#### 5. *The main threat.*

There are numbers of ways by which Czechoslovakia could be attacked by Germany which have been the subject of close study by the General Staff. It had been more or less assumed that the Anschluss would have taken place first and to that extent recent events have not fundamentally altered the problem and indeed no new dispositions have been made so far to counter them. The main threat appears to lie in an attempt to cut the country in two

by attacks from the Glatz salient towards Olomouc and from Vienna or Bratislava northwards towards Brno and Olomouc. These attacks, which might be delivered simultaneously, would doubtless be supported by minor thrusts in a number of other places so as to prevent a concentration of the Czech Army in Moravia. They might well be delivered against Prague from the North and West and from German Silesia near Ratibor towards Prerov if Poland's attitude towards Germany were assured. The General Staff take it for granted that whatever happens the main attack would not be in a West-East direction through Bohemia, by reason of the shape of the country and the configuration and direction of the hills and rivers.

There is a natural reticence at present to discuss any plans for defence and I am unable to indicate what measures in fact the General Staff have in mind to counter the threat envisaged above. The danger to such concentric attacks is that the area for manoeuvre is narrow and an invader would be subject to counter attacks from both flanks. He would therefore have to penetrate in considerable strength. If he were successful in cutting the Czech Army in two and maintaining his position, the intention is understood to be to fight it out to a finish in two groups but I personally don't think this is possible. That portion of the Army which would operate in the mountains of Slovakia would perhaps have a chance to put up a protracted resistance but not the group in Bohemia, where the ground itself offers no special difficulties to operations of all arms except in restricted areas.

## 6. *Conclusion.*

To sum up, my main impressions are as follows:—

*a.* The General Staff consider an attack by Germany on Czechoslovakia within the next year or two probable, as it is impossible to negotiate satisfactorily on the question of the Sudeten Germans. But a declaration by Gt. Britain to stand by France and Russia would probably prevent it.

*b.* The General Staff maintain absolutely that the Czechs will fight it out. I think they will if France and possibly Russia come to their assistance at once but not otherwise and perhaps not if the defences are overrun before they have properly mobilized.

*c.* The General Staff know full well that unsupported they must be smashed. It is merely a question as to whether they can offer any form of protracted resistance. I think this is possible in Slovakia. The Nation is very well organized for war.

*d.* All plans made on the assumption that France will at least mobilize at the outset.

*e.* The General Staff consider the most likely strategic objective of Germany will be to cut the country and the Army in two by North and South attacks through Moravia.

*f.* The frontier defences in themselves possess definite delaying possibilities in the North to large forces and for some time. Sabotage is a great danger.

In the South, delay would only be of a very temporary nature but possibly for a day or two.

g. As regards outside assistance, I am personally doubtful whether France will in fact honour her obligations to the full. Most foreigners here but few Czechs seem to doubt this. As to Russia, my information is that she is unlikely to do so effectively. Yugoslavia will almost certainly remain neutral at the outset.

My reason for expressing a doubt as to France's intentions, which is perhaps outside the scope of this memorandum, is that the assistant French M.A. in Belgrade told me that he felt sure the French peasant could not be induced to fight again for any other object than the defence of his own country and that there was no one in France capable of carrying the people on this issue. He said that the French in their hearts realised this full well. . . .<sup>1</sup>

H. C. T. STRONGE, *Lieutenant-Colonel*  
*Military Attaché.*

<sup>1</sup> The concluding paragraphs gave the Military Attaché's personal views of the tactical action which would be taken by the Czech army in the event of war with Germany.

## No. 121

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 9)*

*No. 324 [C 2777/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *April 1, 1938*

My Lord,

However great has been the shock to the world caused by the incorporation of Austria into Great Germany, and however profound in consequence thereof has been the change in the political, military and economic position of Central and Eastern Europe, it would seem to serve no useful purpose to indulge at this stage in speculation as to the ultimate and sinister intentions of Germany. Her immediate and certain aims afford quite enough material for anxious consideration without allowing one's imagination to run riot about the Ukraine, about Roumania's oil-fields or outlets on the Mediterranean via Trieste or the Balkans.

2. Just as it has always been obvious that Hitler's first objective was Austria, so it is to-day not one whit less clear that his next main objective is a settlement of the question of the Sudetendeutschen; on the basis—if possible—of the right of self-determination, but by force if that right is permanently withheld. A solution of the Corridor, together with a possible rectification of the Silesian frontier, constitutes his third main objective. Danzig and Memel must be regarded as subordinate questions, and, in fact, the Free City is already Nazi and will declare itself reattached to the German Empire at any moment which may seem most opportune. Everything else is purely hypothetical.

3. The above programme represents what I would describe as Hitler's definite and set foreign policy. I do not believe that, whatever may be the



dreams of some of his more ardent followers, he himself contemplates for the time being any other. It may be summed up as the unity of Great Germany and as the natural limits of the divine mission with which Hitler considers himself to have been entrusted in order to complete the work which Frederick the Great and Bismarck left unfinished. Any material advance beyond those limits, except so far as colonies are concerned, which come into a separate category, is, in fact, not only hypothetical but contrary to Hitler's own doctrine of nationality and of a pure German race. Once the above quite definite programme has been accomplished—and it must be remembered that the German-Polish treaty has still six years to run—we shall certainly have to consider the implications of a possible long-term German 'Machtpolitik' and, if it is really such as the prophets would have us believe, Europe will presumably, in due course, unite in self-defence to meet the danger with which it is threatened. But there is, on the other hand, at least an equal possibility that, once the unity, which is comprised in the above programme and to which she claims that she is legitimately entitled, is attained, Germany will settle down into the rôle of a territorially contented European [?State] and concentrate her efforts on internal and economic development and on the acquisition of colonies overseas. Though she is bound to give us an infinity of trouble, I am personally much more inclined to think that this latter contingency will be nearer the truth than I am to anticipate any early German desire to conquer new and non-Germanic worlds. Such adventures may come later, but not in this generation or in Hitler's lifetime. It is a risk which has to be faced on the basis of forewarned is forearmed, and it is of course true that Germany, during the period of the consolidation of her unity, will certainly use her full weight to secure preponderating economic advantages ('Lebensraum') in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe generally and elsewhere. In the end, however, the greater her activities in that respect the more obstinate is likely to be the resistance which she will encounter on the part not only of her competitors, such as Italy, but also of those customers to whom such activities may be unwelcome.

4. For all his fanaticism and his mysticism, Hitler is a realist in the pursuit of his mission. At my interview with him on the 3rd March he declared that 'he did not desire to press for colonies, and could wait for four, six, eight or ten years'. There can be little doubt as to what he meant thereby. It was that, since His Majesty's Government were still opposed to the German unity which he is seeking and insisted on making Austria and Czechoslovakia into restrictive and to him unacceptable conditions of any discussion about colonies, it would be hopeless to begin negotiations about the latter before having first realised his aims in Europe. I think that he was to the extent being honest, just as Herr von Ribbentrop was probably sincere when he told your Lordship in London that we ought to be relieved that one of the outstanding difficulties between our two countries was eliminated by the union with Austria. That is, in fact, the way they look at it. Consequently, it is not until after the Sudeten problem has similarly been liquidated—since in our conversations we have never referred to Poland or the Corridor—that Hitler

will really feel that the time has come to revert to the colonies and may also, since with a settlement of the Sudetendeutschen question the main risk of a general European war will have been averted, then be ready to consider the matter of a limitation of armaments, but not before. This does not mean that, in spite of his own declared willingness to wait, the colonial question will cease to be put, as it has been during the past year, in the forefront of German ambitions. It will be kept there, for the reasons for which it was originally put there, on account of its nuisance value and as a means to divert public opinion in Germany from excessive concentration on other subjects not yet ripe, in Hitler's view, for action. But, pending a settlement of the Sudeten question, and except to keep, so to speak, the pot boiling, it will not be seriously pressed. It will not become a menace until Germany has finally completed her European unity and reached a high enough peak in military and air readiness to allow her to turn at last, if Great Britain continues to be recalcitrant over colonies, to naval rearmament. The naval agreement and limitation of armaments generally will, in fact, probably constitute the *quid pro quo* which Hitler contemplates employing in any colonial negotiation.

5. If the above appreciation is correct, it follows that the main question with which we and Europe generally must now concern ourselves is Czechoslovakia. Nor should it be forgotten that it is not only Germany but Hungary and Poland who come into this picture, and who hope to gain some advantage for themselves out of the fact that, Austria having been united to the Reich, the Sudeten constitute the next definite idea of Hitler's foreign policy. Of Hitler's '10 million Germans living in solid blocks outside the Reich' there remain the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Sudeten. So long as their fate remains unsettled Europe will be exposed to the continuous danger of war, the limits of which it is impossible to foresee. We can, however, be absolutely certain of one thing, namely, that nothing short of war—and not merely the threat of it—will, now or later, induce Hitler to abandon the Sudeten to their present form of existence under a centralised Government at Prague.

6. That being axiomatic and not open to the least doubt whatsoever, the following questions arise:—

(a) Is a peaceful solution of the Sudeten problem realisable? and

(b) What are Hitler's real demands or intentions respecting them?

7. As regards the former question I am personally and firmly of opinion that no half measure short of some form of autonomy and the abandonment, as a corollary, of Czechoslovakia's alliance with Russia can ever afford any prospect of a definite and peaceful solution. Difficult though this may be to achieve, any other course will merely end in the forcible action, which, if successful, will result in the annexation by Germany of those areas at least of Czechoslovakia which lie on the frontier and which are predominantly populated by Germans. Nor do I feel that the problem would be solved by a second German defeat in another world war. The evil day might be postponed for again a generation, but the hereditary hatred of Teuton for Slav is too great, in this age of nationality and the right of self-determination, for the Sudeten, if subjected to a centralised Czech Government at Prague,

ultimately to resist the inexorable attraction of Great Germany. Whereas autonomy offers at least the possibility not only of a peaceful solution by eventual self-determination, but also of the Sudeten even preferring freely and always to remain as co-citizens of the Czechs and Slovaks. I would add here, in parenthesis, that my French colleague, who left yesterday for Paris, told me that he concurred in the above view and intended so to inform his Government.<sup>1</sup>

8. The answer to (b) can best be deduced from Hitler's own most recent remarks to me on the 3rd March as regards Czechoslovakia. 'Germany,' he said, 'was not prepared to allow herself to be influenced from other quarters in the settlement of her relations with countries with large German populations.' 'So far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, the Germans there must be guaranteed autonomy in the cultural and other matters to which they were entitled. That was the simplest application of the right of the self-determination of nations.' 'The present situation was impossible in the long run.' 'The danger to Germany consisted in the accession of Czechoslovakia to the Franco-Russian Pact and her consequent threat to Germany's industrial areas.' 'If internal explosions took place in Austria or in Czechoslovakia, Germany would not remain neutral but act like lightning.'

9. The above statements are taken from the official record of the conversation and must consequently be accepted as authentic. They are sufficiently eloquent of themselves to require little elucidation. I would merely add that when Hitler talks of being satisfied with autonomy for the Sudeten, he probably contemplates that, in due course, the latter will, of their own volition, exercise the right of self-determination and vote for incorporation in Great Germany. He has already given us an example of his lightning methods in the case of Austria. The only difference so far as intervention in Czechoslovakia is concerned will be one of measure. In the latter eventuality, not partial but total mobilisation, with all the consequences which that may entail, will be ordered. The action taken as regards Austria, can, in fact, be regarded from the German point of view as a mere curtain-raiser in which the risk of foreign opposition was held to be slight. In the case of Czechoslovakia the danger of intervention will be recognised as extremely serious and the consequences carefully weighed. For that reason it is highly improbable that Hitler will wish to act until his army notifies him that it is ready for all, even the most extreme, emergencies. So far as my information goes this will not be for a year or so. All other things being equal, there should still remain, therefore, a period during which either preparation can be made at home either for another world war or for the negotiation of a peaceful settlement as regards the Sudeten. We cannot, however, count on all other things being equal. The patience of the Sudeten themselves may not last till then, and we are perpetually at the mercy of an incident resulting in bloodshed in Czechoslovakia itself. If it were on a sufficiently large scale, even Hitler's own hand might unwillingly be forced; i.e., before his army was

<sup>1</sup> A reference to a third opinion is here omitted.

ready. It is unfortunately true that in Germany to-day the extremists have the upper hand; Hitler's two most moderate advisers, Field-Marshal von Blomberg and Baron von Neurath, are in eclipse—the success of the Austrian *coup* has greatly encouraged the extremists and all the tub-thumping propaganda which has followed it [has] dangerously excited the populace. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that where Great Germany and direct German interests—such as the Sudeten—are concerned, Hitler has the fullest support not only of Nazi extremists, but of the whole German nation without exception, Nazi or otherwise.

10. If the German army were prepared for all eventualities I would regard an early 'incident' as inevitable. Since, however, I am advised that it is not, I expect that the Sudeten will have been warned that their agitation must for the present be kept within such limits as will not involve the risk of forcible action by the Czech authorities against them. At the same time events have a way of precipitating themselves, and, if the world is not to be faced with another sudden crisis on the lines of the Schuschnigg plebiscite, there should be no undue delay in attempting to find a peaceful solution of this question. Dr. Benes may be unwilling to act under the pressure of recent events in Austria. On the other hand, the declaration of the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on the 24th March has had a sobering effect here in Germany. It would be a pity to waste the healthy and stabilising impression which that speech has created, nor can the undertakings given by Field-Marshal Göring be regarded as indefinite. Though Dr. Benes may find it unpalatable to yield to German pressure, he might at heart not be displeased to save his face by yielding to Anglo-French advice. It is certainly not pleasant advice to give, yet I am convinced that, if it be not given, the last state of Czechoslovakia will not only be far worse than the first, but the whole of Europe may well be involved in her misfortunes.

I have, &c.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

## No. 122

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 2)*

*No. 59 Telegraphic [C 2471/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 2, 1938

Dr. Masaryk has informed me of an authoritative suggestion<sup>1</sup> made to him in London to the effect that Czechoslovak Government on their own initiative should inform British and French Government of utmost they could do to meet wishes of German minority and at the same time should invite British and French good offices. He had come to Prague to lay this suggestion

<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent telegram addressed to Sir A. Cadogan Mr. Newton reported that the authoritative suggestion referred to 'came from Sir S. Hoare [Secretary of State for Home Affairs] at an informal lunch. Dr. Masaryk believed that the suggestion, although informal, had been made after consultation with the Prime Minister and perhaps Sir R. Vansittart.'

before the President and Government who had accepted it and were actively engaged in working out a plan.

Yesterday I saw Prime Minister who confirmed that Czechoslovak Government were working out such a programme with all possible speed. The Prime Minister said that offer of assistance made by Mr. Chamberlain in his speech had been welcomed with pleasure and that they were now acting on Dr. Masaryk's message. The Prime Minister expected to have his plan ready in the course of a week or ten days and would then communicate it to His Majesty's Government and the French Government with an intimation that their good offices would be appreciated in case of need. While I was with him he telephoned on the subject with Czechoslovak Minister at Paris. I informed the Prime Minister that I had not myself as yet received any communication from you but that I was very pleased to be enabled to inform you of what was being done.

I took the opportunity to express to Prime Minister my fear that his broadcast speech would hardly suffice to reassure critics that Czechoslovak Government really meant business. It was in fact I said being alleged, if and so soon as immediate crisis seemed to have passed, the Czechoslovak Government would probably do nothing effective. I also drew his attention to the rather ominous nature of Herr Hitler's speech reported in Berlin telegram No. 155 Saving.<sup>2</sup>

The Prime Minister explained that he could not go further than he did at that moment partly for tactical reasons but that he had the President and Government behind him and was determined to take no half measures but to draw up a programme designed to achieve a final and definite solution. He had already had conversations with Herr Henlein's authorized representatives including Parliamentary leaders Herr Kundt and Dr. Pfrogner.

When they had consulted with Sudetic German Party there would be further conversations probably next Friday.

In reply to my suggestion that it might help to relax tension if it was known that he was in direct consultation with Henlein party he informed me that a brief communiqué announcing the fact of conversations would be issued later in the day. (This has appeared in this morning's press.) He also told me that prohibition of public meetings had been agreed to by the above-mentioned Henlein representatives (see my telegram No. 54 Saving).<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

### No. 123

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 48 Telegraphic [C 2359/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 2, 1938

My telegram No. 42.<sup>1</sup>

In a conversation with Sir S. Hoare on March 25, the Czechoslovak

<sup>1</sup> No. 110.



Minister more than once asked the latter what advice he ought to give in present circumstances to the Czechoslovak Government on the Sudeten German question.

Sir S. Hoare replied that he was speaking as an old friend and as an individual, and that he had had no discussion with me on the details of the position. Sir S. Hoare's own view, however, was that if he were in the position of President Benes, he would ask the British and French Governments to give him their good offices in helping to make a really satisfactory arrangement for the German minority. It was much better that President Benes himself should take the initiative in a matter of this kind and that there should be no suggestion of any dictation from outside as to what he ought to do with his own fellow-subjects.

The Czechoslovak Minister said he had come to very much the same conclusion.

I send you this for your information, and so that you may use it if opportunity offers. As foreshadowed in my telegram under reference, I shall probably wish to exchange views with the Czechoslovak Government on this subject in the not very distant future. It would, however, be all to the good if the exchange of views should start by an approach from the Czechoslovak side, and anything you could do to bring this about would be useful.

Meanwhile I should be glad to know what reaction, if any, the Czech Minister for Foreign Affairs showed to the communication you made in accordance with my telegram under reference.

Repeated to Berlin.

## No. 124

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 8)*

*No. 56 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2674/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 2, 1938

My telegram No. 59.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Jan Masaryk said he would be grateful if His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin could directly or indirectly put in a word to persuade German Government or Party circles that if patience is exercised for a fortnight the Czechoslovak Government will be able to prove their genuine determination to effect a far-reaching settlement. I cannot endorse this suggestion unreservedly because I fear that opposition here to radical reform remains strong and may become stronger.

During my first conversation with Dr. Masaryk late last Wednesday he promised to supply me on the following day with a written summary of the measures proposed by President Benes. He also said that if the Government here found it too embarrassing to admit publicly that Czechoslovakia was a State of nationalities rather than a national State he would be prepared to

<sup>1</sup> No. 122.

take any unpleasant consequences upon himself by making such a statement in a published interview. As I did not receive the summary I telephoned on Friday and was promised a more up-to-date and complete revise by Saturday. Nevertheless, late last night Dr. Masaryk explained that Dr. Benes had changed his mind and decided that it would be premature to communicate an outline of the Government proposals to me until they had been discussed and approved by the Cabinet, which may be a matter of some ten days. In reply to my enquiry regarding the question of nationalities, he said that Dr. Benes did not wish him to make the proposed statement at present, fearing it might provoke too strong a reaction. There are also signs in the Czech press of growing opposition to any large measures of concession.

Unless, therefore, Sir N. Henderson thinks that dissatisfaction in Germany with the attitude of the Czechoslovak Government as so far revealed may reach bursting point, I think it is desirable that strong pressure should continue to be maintained from the Reich as well as from England and, if possible, France.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 125

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 5)*

*No. 152 Telegraphic [C 2533/1941/18]*

BERLIN, April 5, 1938

Prague telegrams Nos. 59<sup>1</sup> and 56 Saving.<sup>2</sup>

Subject to an unforeseen incident, I have no reason to believe that there is any particular urgency about Czechoslovak proposals. It is much more important that the reforms should be radical than that proposals should be produced in a hurry, and I should be very loath to speak even unofficially to German Government on the subject unless it was certain that Czechoslovak Government meant to work on the basis of nationalities rather than on that of national centralised State.

Anything less is in my opinion doomed to failure sooner or later. In a despatch<sup>3</sup> which I wrote some days ago but which will only reach you by next bag I expressed firm conviction that nothing short of a form of autonomy and consequent abandonment of Russian axis affords any prospect of final settlement by peaceful means. Crux of the whole matter is right of self-determination.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 122.

<sup>2</sup> No. 124. It will be seen that this telegram had not been received in the Foreign Office on April 5.

<sup>3</sup> The reference appears to be to No. 121.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 6)*  
*No. 61 Telegraphic [C 2586/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 5, 1938

In talking over Sudeten German question generally with my German colleague I found him considerably reassured by the news of an amnesty and communal elections and above all by initiation of conversations between Czechoslovak Government and representatives of Henlein.

He had had the same impression as I (see my telegram No. 56 Saving)<sup>1</sup> of a Czech reaction against far-reaching concessions specially he thought on the part of the High Command and Legionaries but he believed the Government were now serious in their intentions. I told him that I had been assured by Dr. Hodza of his determination to avoid half measures and seek a definite solution and that although I was not acting as an intermediary I knew Dr. Hodza had no objection to my so informing him.

I went on to say that widespread impression which has reached me from three different countries not including France and England was liable to give pause to advocates of a far-reaching settlement. This impression was that those concerned did not honestly desire a final settlement but merely a loosening of Sudeten German connexion with Prague in order to facilitate eventual detachment of these areas and their incorporation in the Germanic Reich. German Minister seemed impressed by this observation and from Mr. Calvert's<sup>2</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup> mentioned in my immediately following telegram<sup>4</sup> I think he would certainly have suspected French instigation had I not expressly excluded it. He replied that German Government did not wish to incorporate Sudeten Germans in the Reich nor did he believe that Sudeten leaders wished for such incorporation. What was desired was that German minority should be able to feel that it enjoyed real racial equality within the State. It was however now the last moment for satisfying Sudeten Germans and perhaps it was already too late to overcome suspicions and dislikes arising out of their treatment at Czech hands hitherto. Of course neither German Minister nor German Minister for Foreign Affairs is a decisive authority and German Minister was almost bound to reply as he did. But I believe him personally to be sincere and thought that in any case it might do no harm to show that we were alive to the possibility of an ultimate intention to dismember Czechoslovakia.

I reminded him that at one of my first conversations<sup>5</sup> with him (see my despatch No. 112<sup>5</sup> of 1937, paragraph 6) I had expressed a fear lest Sudeten

<sup>1</sup> No. 124.

<sup>2</sup> The reference here is uncertain; there may possibly be an error in transcription for 'Havas'. See note 4.

<sup>3</sup> The text here is uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that the German Minister was annoyed by a Havas agency statement broadcast from Strasbourg that he was in negotiation with the Czechoslovak Government and by press reports that Dr. Marek, Austrian Minister in Prague, had been arrested in Vienna. He suspected French authorship in both cases.

<sup>5</sup> This conversation took place in April 1937.

Germans would only open their mouths wider as concessions were made; that he had denied this saying that their requirements would shortly be defined, that their six bills had soon afterwards been tabled but as authors themselves admitted left their final demands indefinite, and that Henlein's deputy, Herr Frank, had only the other day made a speech indicating a series of demands which remained still undefined and would presumably advance *crescendo* (see my telegram No. 60).<sup>6</sup> German Minister replied that he believed Sudeten German Party while not expecting all their requirements to be met at once would be prepared to make them all known during present negotiations.

I referred also to suggestions sometimes encountered that there might be a split in the coalition so that if what was desired could not be obtained from present Government it might be achieved through a government constituted by Henlein and Agrarian parties together. I am sure that German Minister was quite sincere when he expressed complete agreement with my view that an attempt to reach a solution in this manner would be most unfortunate. He said that if M. Benes could not be won he would be a most dangerous opponent and he appreciated that it would obviously be a mistake for the minority quarter of the country to found any far-reaching settlement on an agreement with little more than another quarter of the country . . .<sup>7</sup> with practically the remaining three quarters represented by present coalition Government.

German Minister showed that he wished to intervene as little as possible in Sudeten German question considering it to be far better that a solution should, if possible, be reached direct between Government and Sudeten German leaders. I had thought it just possible that he might indicate that it was becoming superfluous for His Majesty's Government or other foreign Governments to concern themselves with relations between Sudeten Germans and the Reich. I was glad therefore to notice no such tendency but on the contrary that he personally at any rate seemed to welcome our interest and any assistance we could give.<sup>8</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>6</sup> Not printed.

<sup>7</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>8</sup> On April 11 Mr. Newton was informed that his language to the German Minister was approved.

#### No. 127

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 6)*

*No. 63. Telegraphic [C 2634/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 5, 1938

Your telegram No. 48<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 59.<sup>2</sup>

I visited Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 5 and recounted briefly what

<sup>1</sup> No. 123.

<sup>2</sup> No. 122.

Masaryk had told me, the confirmation in first part of your telegram and information given to me by M. Hodza.

I reminded him of statement in your telegram No. 42<sup>3</sup> that His Majesty's Government might wish to exchange views on minority question with Czechoslovak Government, remarked that both parties would no doubt prefer that initiative should come from his side and suggested that promised communication of Czechoslovak Government proposals might be taken as such an initiative. Minister for Foreign Affairs quite agreed. He anticipated that His Majesty's Government and French Governments would examine these proposals and then intimate either their concurrence or their view that they should be amended. In the former case he hoped that the two Governments would be prepared to give support to Czechoslovak attitude in Berlin if necessary. In general moreover it would be of great value if they would be prepared to state their opinion that Henlein's demands were excessive if they in fact came to that conclusion.

In the alternative case the proposals could be further discussed between the three Governments and Czechoslovak Government would see how much further they could go. Of course if agreement could not then be reached the situation would be disagreeable but he hoped that nothing would be done to make their position more difficult than it already was.

I gathered that Minister for Foreign Affairs would not appreciate any contact between His Majesty's Government and Herr Henlein but in the absence of knowledge as to what procedure you have in mind I did not investigate this point. In my first visit to Minister for Foreign Affairs just over a year ago he volunteered an observation that he hoped I would not at that time give an interview to Henlein. I had in any case no thought of doing so at the beginning of my appointment when my first object was to win the confidence of Czechoslovak Government nor has the question of an interview arisen in fact then or since.

Please repeat to Paris.

<sup>3</sup> No. 110.

## No. 128

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 9)*  
*No. 329 [C 2817/2310/18]*

BERLIN, April 5, 1938

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of Munich despatch No. 62 of the 24th March, 1938, reporting upon public opinion on the union of Austria with Germany.



*Consul-General Gainer to Sir N. Henderson*  
*No. 62*

MUNICH, *March 24, 1938*

Sir,

So far as Germany herself is concerned, the most obvious result of the 'Anschluss' has been to increase Herr Hitler's personal prestige and popularity, which were already approaching perilously near to a worship, religious in its fervour.

2. The plebiscite which will take place on the 10th April cannot but show an overwhelming majority in favour of Herr Hitler's action. The issue upon which this plebiscite is to be taken is, in fact, already decided, and the plebiscite will merely endorse the decision and can change nothing. The great majority of Germans in all walks of life and of all shades of political opinion approve of the 'Anschluss'. Greater Germany has become a fact; 6½ million people have been added to Germany's population; the area of Germany is now greater than before the war; stocks of gold and foreign currency have fallen into Germany's hands, as also raw materials, minerals and agricultural products; the military strength of Germany has received a valuable addition; German influence in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, both political and economic, cannot but enormously increase. What people, when asked to approve of this, could respond otherwise than with 'Yes', even were the plebiscite to be held under conditions which would satisfy democratic ideas?

3. One factor is perhaps more disquieting than the German people's approval of the end, and that is its approval of the means used to attain that end. From the very day that action against Austria was inaugurated, a campaign was started in the press and wireless in order to educate the people to approve also of the methods. No people is to-day more ignorant of the views of the outside world than is the German people; no people can more easily be made to believe what its Government wishes [it] to believe. Schuschnigg had broken his word given at Berchtesgaden, he had allied himself with the 'Reds', Bolsheviks and Jews were in control in Austria, pan-Germans and Nazis were being assaulted, if not worse. The loyal German-Austrians were forced to call upon the German Liberator also to save them. Germany magnanimously responded and effected the liberation of Austria without bloodshed and without more than pious protests against the methods employed from some Powers and with the sympathy of other Powers. The German Government now asks: 'Did we act rightly?' and the only possible answer is 'Yes'.

4. 'Thank God I have lived to see this day' was said to me by a person of moderate conservative views, and that well expresses the feelings of the great majority of his fellow citizens.

5. Thus, the Nazi régime is strengthened and Herr Hitler receives a vote of confidence on his foreign policy which is also booked to the credit of his internal policy.

6. The sinister aspect of the case is, however, that the more forward spirits of the N.S.D.A.P. have been proved to be right. Cautious and moderate influences have suffered eclipse. The forward policy has been vindicated and doubters have been won over. If another moment comes when Germany claims that the interests of the German race are involved, she may be tempted, and will be strongly urged, to repeat the experiment. Rearmament, the denunciation of the Treaty of Locarno and the 'Anschluss' are major instances of the piecemeal destruction of the Treaty of Versailles. None of these changes in the *status quo* has been negotiated though the possibility and the machinery for so doing have always existed. All these questions have been solved by unilateral action on Germany's part and the last by a definite show of armed force. The temptation to tear up the remaining paragraphs of the Treaty of Versailles in the same way must be overwhelming.

7. It is, however, unlikely that the danger is immediate unless a sudden emergency arise. None of the blows above mentioned has been struck without careful preparation, although in the case of Austria the moment came sooner than had been expected and planned. Austria has first to be fully absorbed. There are grave problems to be solved there, problems of an economic, financial, political and administrative nature, before the time can become ripe for another move. Europe should be able to obtain a breathing space in which to prepare—for what? For war, or to set in train negotiations designed to solve by more civilised means those European questions which Germany intends shall be solved in one way or another?

8. A doubt must, however, arise as to the ability of modern Germany to negotiate—undue exercise of strength in the past may have brought impotence in that respect in its train, and other methods have been shown to be highly efficacious and incomparably speedier.

I have, &c.

D. ST. CLAIR GAINER

#### No. 129

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 9)*

*No. 99 [C 2805/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 6, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Legation giving an account of his observations on a recent tour of the fortifications on the northern Czechoslovak frontier.

2. Colonel Stronge is of the opinion that if this country is given the necessary breathing space it will have prepared a system of fortifications strong enough to offer very serious resistance to an eventual German attack. (This is naturally on the assumption that a French mobilisation will retain a large percentage of the German armed forces in the west.)

3. I would draw attention to Colonel Stronge's estimate of the large pro-

portion of Sudeten Germans who would not now be satisfied with anything less than union with the Reich. A similar view was taken by a well-informed German in conversation yesterday with a member of my staff. This informant stated that the mass of the Sudeten German population were now in favour of union with Germany on the grounds that this was the simplest solution of their troubles; they found it difficult, on the other hand, to understand the complicated schemes for various aspects of autonomy within the Czechoslovak State which the Sudeten German party or the Government might elaborate.

I have, &c.

B. C. NEWTON

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 129

*Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. T. Stronge to Mr. Newton*

PRAGUE, *April 3, 1938*

As reported to you verbally I have just returned from a tour of the frontier fortifications in the north. A full detailed report on my observations is being sent to the War Office, and I attach a copy herewith<sup>1</sup> (less map and sketches of which there is a copy in my office).

The journey I made took me through all that portion of the Sudetendeutsch country which lies between Podmokly (east [*sic*: ? north] of Prague) and Moravska Ostrava in North-eastern Moravia. At various places I had occasion to talk to persons belonging to what might be called the rank and file of the population, such as hotel porters and casual visitors to cafés, and at Liberec (Reichenberg) I had a long conversation with Mr. Pares, His Majesty's consul. As a result of these talks I have formed a rather pessimistic impression as to the possibility now of solving amicably the problem of the German minority, because this minority appears in the last few weeks to have radically altered its view point. Whereas, previous to the German occupation of Austria, their demands upon the Czech Government were concerned with the improvement of their lot within the structure of the Republic, it now seems that in spite of Herr Neuwirth's recent assurances that autonomy is the goal, nothing short of incorporation in the German Reich will satisfy the majority of the people. It would no longer seem to be a question of redressing grievances and making concessions, the practical standpoint having given way to the ideological. It is with great reserve that I make a numerical estimate, which it is quite impossible to do accurately, but I am strongly of the impression that considerably under 50 per cent. of the people in the districts visited by me would to-day be content with anything which the Czechs have it in their power to concede.

Mr. Pares informed me that even in the most responsible circles at Reichenberg the view was now being taken that Dr. Hodza's recent speech on internal policy was so unconciliatory in tone and substance that the people no longer felt themselves bound to their former policy. The Prime Minister had,

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

in fact, practically absolved them from their pledges of loyalty to the State. Such a distortion of fact can only have serious consequences.

I was also given to understand that the morale of the party, whose factions have so recently been united, stands very high indeed and that the Czech police are becoming more and more powerless to carry out their instructions in respect of the conduct of meetings. In many cases they give up the task at the outset and retire into the background.

As to the course which events may take it is not for me to make prophesies, but when one hears that the Sudetens now feel that it is incumbent upon them to help Herr Hitler in his struggle in face of British and French admonition it would be wrong to underestimate the gravity of the outlook. From the Czech point of view, and particularly from the military aspect, it can only be hoped that the account can either be settled politically with Germany direct or that Herr Hitler is able to control his would-be subjects sufficiently well to prevent them forcing the pace. As it seems probable that the German army is not yet ready for a European war, Herr Henlein may be told to toe the line for the present. If the crisis can only be shelved until next year the Czechs will be in a far better position to resist an invasion than they are to-day, and if it does come then it is my firm opinion that they will surprise not only their enemies, but all those whose judgment of their capacity for defence is based on a mere glance at the map. Another year of peace is vital, but it seems quite uncertain whether it can be achieved.

H. C. T. STRONGE, *Lt.-Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché.*

**No. 130**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 9)*

*No. 100 [C 2806/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 6, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a despatch from His Majesty's consul at Liberec depicting a very serious situation in the Sudeten German areas.

2. A member of my staff was informed yesterday by an adherent of the Henlein party that, after a heated discussion by the party leaders on the attitude to be adopted in the negotiations with Dr. Hodza, the moderate elements had won the day. It must be hoped that they will be equally successful in dealing with the exalted mood of the German population.

3. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.  
B. C. NEWTON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 130  
*Consul Pares to Mr. Newton*  
No. 13

LIBEREC, April 6, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to report that the general unrest in this area does not appear to have decreased in the past two weeks. The speech of M. Hodza was severely criticised in the provincial press, and private persons also have expressed to me their great disappointment on account of its lack of constructive suggestions. The general opinion seems to have been that the speech was extremely unsatisfactory, and I am told that the comment of the average man was 'Now we are free', i.e., 'Now we need have no more scruples'. Some indications of the unsettled feeling which prevails are worth mentioning. From several sources I have heard that payment of taxes is being withheld or postponed. One of the principal Czech frontier newspapers reports some minor acts of provocation against Government officials, mainly police, whilst on duty, and one frequently hears now that people in the streets give the Nazi salute openly and greet one another with 'Heil Hitler!' A British subject who has resided in North Bohemia for many years and lives in the closest possible daily contact with the Sudeten Germans informed me last week that word was being passed round from mouth to mouth in Gablonz that the inhabitants should hold themselves prepared for some great event on the 26th April. He said that many of his acquaintances have begun to hint that they are in possession of secret arms. Against this story, on the other hand, must be set the views of a frankly Nazi Sudeten German, who told me that under the present strict supervision it would be absolutely impossible to smuggle arms from Germany into this country or to obtain them here. It is most probable that if stores of arms do indeed exist they are neither large nor important.

2. It seems safe to say that during the past few weeks the majority of Sudeten Germans has ceased to be even nominally loyal to the State as the party leaders still profess to be. My British informant said that his friends have openly declared that if Henlein is not prepared to adopt a radical policy he will be disavowed and brushed aside. A Deputy of the Sudeten German party in conversation with one of my friends said he expected that the present negotiations with the Czechoslovak Government would require many months, and he was doubtful whether the patience of the rank and file would last so long. Under the stimulus of the excitement caused by the 'Anschluss', Sudeten Germans have come to believe that the present time is particularly favourable for Germany. The idea is beginning to appear that it would be safest for the Sudeten Germans to refuse to accept anything less than separation from Czechoslovakia, because any smaller concessions obtained now from the Czechs, having been extorted practically by force, would inevitably be withdrawn by the latter in time to come if Germany should become less powerful.



3. The grandiose projects for industrial development and unemployment relief in Austria, which were introduced almost immediately after the 'Anschluss', have made a great impression on the Sudeten German working classes, who naturally compare the energetic and liberal action in Germany with the depressed local conditions. They are now becoming impatient and wish for a speedy union with Germany, in order that they may share in these benefits. The growth of this feeling is attested by manufacturers, who know well enough what is in the minds of their employees. A case recently reported in the newspapers from Bärnsdorf, near Liberec, shows how far the workers are now prepared to go in order to assert the right to work. A factory in this small village, which has been standing idle for nearly twenty years and from which all the machinery was removed long ago, was recently sold to a firm of house-breakers, but about 600 local unemployed assembled in front and forbade the employees of the purchasing firm to pull down the empty building. They actually caused the work to be stopped and established pickets outside the factory. They sent an appeal to the Ministry of Labour, and declared that until the Ministry had given its decision they would prevent the demolition of the factory at all costs. It seems probable that the whole affair was engineered by the Sudeten German party, since a Deputy of the party acted as spokesman for the demonstrators. The warning is none the less clear.

4. A member of the local chamber of commerce told me that the chamber has received information to the effect that the German tariff will shortly be introduced for goods imported into former Austrian territory. Czechoslovakia's commercial treaty with Austria guaranteed special customs preferences, whereas her treaty with Germany contains only the most-favoured-nation clause. Textile manufacturers here expect that when this treaty has been declared to have lapsed—the period of notice is only three months—a very serious situation will arise. Textiles used to form about one-third of Czechoslovakia's total exports to Austria, and local industry will presumably be badly hit, so that the unemployment problem will again become serious.

5. The Jews in this district are very alarmed, and I know of several persons who are making preparations to leave. A large local Jewish firm has dismissed many of its employees. Some persons have already gone away. It has been reported to me that a Jewess was publicly beaten in Gablonz on account of some indiscreet remark about Hitler.

6. The merging of the Activist parties in the Sudeten German party has given the latter a considerable accession of strength in the municipal administrations of towns in the German areas. Reports recently published in the press show that the former Activist municipal councillors have in a number of cases arranged to act in concert with the local branch of the Henlein party, and have constituted committees on which the local leaders of the party are represented. Such committees have been formed in six of the larger German towns already, and no doubt other large towns will follow suit. It is not unlikely that the reported decision of the Government to hold municipal elections this year may have been influenced by the fact that through the fusion of the former Activists with the Sudeten German party the latter has already

won a large measure of influence, and in some cases a decisive control, in municipal administration. The position in Liberec now is that the mayor has gone on sick leave indefinitely. The population, in view of the probability that elections will be held soon, seems at present to be content with this compromise.

I have, &c.  
P. PARES

No. 131

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received April 9)

No. 73. *Telegraphic* [C 2844/1941/18]

PRAGUE, April 3, 1938

My Saving telegram No. 66 and my telegrams Nos. 70 and 71.<sup>1</sup>

In order to ascertain whether these manifestations were tactical or indicate a serious deterioration in Sudeten German question in the view of the Government, I asked Prime Minister if he could receive me this afternoon.

Meanwhile I understand from Minister for Foreign Affairs that you have been informed by Czechoslovak Minister in London that communiqué published by Sudeten German party on April 6<sup>2</sup> and their ostentatious withdrawal from Chamber of Deputies on April 7 were tactical moves. This the Prime Minister confirmed but he added the more moderate elements had felt bound to act in this way in order to remain in control of the situation and of the spirits which Henlein party itself had conjured up. They had felt bound to go some way with strong flow of the course of German racial feeling in order not to be outdone by extremists headed by Herr Frank. Herr Henlein himself was a weak personality who vacillated between moderates and extremists. The Prime Minister admitted that he had been uneasy after demonstration in the Chamber lest moderates should have lost their courage but he had since received explanations in the foregoing sense and hoped probably next week to hold another discussion with Henlein party representatives for the purpose of preparing the ground for actual negotiations.

He had seen them on April 6 when they had informed him that what he had so far said was inadequate but that they were ready to continue discussions. They had demanded self-administration and a share in the State administration. They had also demanded reparation for damage said to have been inflicted on German interests by land reform after 1918 to which Prime Minister had replied that they must produce concrete instances for consideration.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. These telegrams referred (i) to a meeting of the political committee of Herr Henlein's party, (ii) to the censorship of the Sudeten newspaper 'Die Zeit', (iii) to a bill introduced by the Czechoslovak Government requiring financial institutions to hold certain of their deposits in Government bonds.

<sup>2</sup> In a communiqué issued to the press, the Sudeten German leaders declared that at the interview between three of their number and Dr. Hodza on April 3 no *rapprochement* had been reached.

The highly charged and explosive nature of the atmosphere to which I referred on the strength of information from Colonel Stronge (see despatches Nos. 99<sup>3</sup> and 100<sup>4</sup> and my telegram No. 72)<sup>5</sup> and also other sources was fully appreciated by Prime Minister who said that orders had been given that no shot was to be fired under whatever provocation. He also realised the danger of deliberate agents provocateurs and had given instructions for control of communist elements and suppression where necessary of their newspapers. Herr Kundt, the Sudeten German Leader, was moreover at that very moment in conference with the Minister of the Interior regarding the maintenance of order.

The proposals mentioned at our last meeting on April 1st (see my telegram No. 59)<sup>6</sup> were being submitted to the Cabinet this evening and would then be referred for elaboration in detail to the competent Government department; I understood that some communiqué to that effect might be given to the press. Early next week a strictly confidential communication on the subject as already foreshadowed would be presented in London and Paris with request that good offices of British and French Governments should be at the disposal of Czechoslovak Government in the event of need. Incidentally he mentioned that so-called minority statute (see my telegram No. 51 Saving)<sup>7</sup> would probably be called 'Nationalities Statute' on which change of name I ventured to congratulate him.

I took the opportunity to mention that I had heard that some disappointment or even mistrust had been occasioned because no official promise and date in the matter of local elections had been published. Prime Minister said that the news in the press was quite definite and that it was proposed to hold elections in June. In reply to my enquiry whether an earlier date would not be even more reassuring he explained that some six weeks' notice was required and that notice itself could not properly be given until prohibition of meetings expired at the end of April.

Please repeat to Paris. Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> No. 129.

<sup>4</sup> No. 130.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed.

<sup>6</sup> No. 122.

<sup>7</sup> Not printed.

### No. 132

*Mr. Mack (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 19)*

*No. 107 [C 3131/2310/18]*

VIENNA, April 8, 1938

My Lord,

Before this mission closes and the diplomatic representation of His Majesty in Vienna, which has extended over centuries, finally ceases, I venture to submit an account which I have kept within as brief a compass as possible of the events leading up to the present situation and the conversion into a provincial German town of a great capital—a capital which admittedly has, since the war, been but a shadow of its former self.

2. The little Austria of the Treaty of Saint-Germain passed through much tribulation during its existence of less than two decades. Remembrance of the misery of the immediate post-war years is still fresh in the minds of many Austrians. It prepared them for any further blows which Fate might have in store. Economic union with Germany was barred. With the help of the League of Nations Austria was set economically and financially upon her feet. In the opinion of qualified international financiers and economists there was no reason why Austria should not continue to exist as a separate entity. There was, however, much distress and unemployment, which has continued even to the present day, and the discontent at the lack of openings in all branches of public life and activity made the youth of the country open to any kind of propaganda. Only a few weeks ago the Youth Leader of the Patriotic Front told me that he was appalled by the magnitude of his task and that he felt that the only way of solving the problem of those between the ages of 12 and 26 who not only had no work to do but had never had any opportunity of doing any was one which could only be dealt with on the lines of something like the 'Arbeitsdienst' in Germany.

3. The history of post-war Austria is largely a history of Austro-German relations, with the exception of a brief interlude when Italy more or less dictated to the Austrian Government what their policy was to be. It was at the behest of Italy that the Socialists were rooted out in February 1934, and it was the despatch by Signor Mussolini of two divisions to the Brenner in July 1934, after the murder of Dr. Dollfuss, which saved Austria from what would probably have been a German invasion. Then came the Abyssinian war. Irritated, and probably frightened by the attitude of the League of Nations in maintaining sanctions, even after Addis Ababa had fallen, and in refusing to recognise the conquest of Abyssinia, Signor Mussolini felt that it was necessary for him to establish good relations with Germany, even though he must have realised that he would be the weaker partner and would be treated accordingly. Thus the Rome-Berlin axis was forged and with it the doom of Austria was sealed, unless a satisfactory arrangement were concluded between the United Kingdom and Italy, with France either an associate or at least a tacit approver, before Germany felt herself strong enough to lay her hands on Austria. This was Dr. von Schuschnigg's main hope, and it is in the light of this consideration that his policy of the last two years should be judged.

4. The course of Austro-German relations during these last two years may be briefly described. With Signor Mussolini's consent Dr. von Schuschnigg concluded with Herr Hitler the agreement of the 11th July, 1936. By this agreement Herr Hitler publicly recognised the independence and integrity of Austria and undertook to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of the country; he admitted explicitly that national socialism in Austria was an exclusively Austrian concern. For his part Dr. von Schuschnigg declared that Austria confessed herself to be a German State and undertook to guide her foreign policy in the future on this basis. Other arrangements for improving the relations between the two countries were embodied in a separate

protocol; they included arrangements for the mutual readmission of newspapers, for the examination of various points of friction, and provision for regular meetings between representatives of both countries in regard to political, cultural and other matters.

5. It soon became clear to the Austrian authorities that Germany had no intention of observing this agreement. Money continued to flow in for the Austrian Nazis as before and demands were repeatedly made which went far beyond the terms of the agreement itself. On their side, the Austrian Government, realising the mentality with which they were dealing, spared no effort to avoid giving any cause of complaint to Germany, or any excuse for the assertion that they were not loyally abiding by the terms of the agreement. As late as last October, Dr. Guido Schmidt told me very seriously that he spent anxious hours over every question affecting Austro-German relations, in order to make sure that no action which the Austrian Government took could be construed by any stretch of the imagination as a breach of the July Agreement. Herr Hitler has said that Dr. von Schuschnigg did not abide by its terms. He has not quoted chapter and verse for this assertion and I doubt very much whether he could prove it. The most that could, I think, be said is that the Austrian Government may have been dilatory in putting into effect various provisions of the agreement; and it is certain that this stonewalling did not suit Herr Hitler. I would myself venture to hazard a guess that Herr Hitler felt that the restoration of the old relationship between the United Kingdom and Italy might spell the doom of his hopes of incorporating Austria peacefully in the Third Reich, and that it was the prospect of the opening of the Anglo-Italian conversations at the beginning of this year which finally made him decide to press matters in Austria. I am confirmed in this belief by the fact that after the exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and Signor Mussolini in August of last year, several reports came in from independent quarters to the effect that Herr Hitler intended to push matters and to find some excuse for intervening and despatching German troops into Austria. Herr Hitler had not forgotten that France did not move when he entered the Rhineland. With Italy neutralised, why, he must have argued, should France or any other country move if he entered Austria?

6. The turning-point in Austro-German relations came with the discovery of the famous Tavs document in the Teinfaltstrasse on the 26th January. I have been unable to secure a copy of this document. We do know, however, that it contained a complete plan for the staging of an incident in Austria which would give the German troops an opportunity to march in and restore order. The immediate reaction of the Austrian authorities to its discovery was one of great anxiety. After twenty-four hours, however, they began to adopt a less gloomy outlook and Dr. Guido Schmidt informed His Majesty's Minister on the 29th January that the affair was causing the Austrian Government no concern. The Chancellor himself never thought that Herr Hitler would send troops into Austria.

7. Herr von Papen was sent for immediately and given the document to take to Herr Hitler. He left for Germany, but the Blomberg incident and the



lengthy discussions in Germany which followed it prevented him from discussing the matter satisfactorily. He returned from Berlin and told the Chancellor that he would like to arrange a talk between him and Herr Hitler and settle matters amicably. A few days later he was dismissed from his post. He went off and saw Herr Hitler and came back with the summons to Dr. von Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden. Dr. von Schuschnigg decided to go secretly, and the press announced on the morning of the 12th February that he had left for Innsbruck.

8. The meeting with Herr Hitler took place at Berchtesgaden on Saturday, the 12th February. A detailed account of the meeting and its results was contained in Mr. Palairot's despatch No. 50 of the 20th February. It was a case of blackmail amounting to aggression. In the discussion which took place during the morning, Herr Hitler turned Dr. von Schuschnigg inside-out. He told him that he himself was an Austrian, that he knew the feelings of the people of Austria, and that he would not allow his fellow-countrymen to be oppressed any longer. He offered to stand as candidate against Dr. von Schuschnigg in a plebiscite, an offer which Dr. von Schuschnigg rejected on constitutional grounds. Herr Hitler's tirade even included a bitter reproach for the execution of Planetta, the murderer of Dr. Dollfuss. A gloomy lunch followed, which lasted twelve minutes, and at which Herr Hitler only ate spinach. The atmosphere in the house may be gathered from the fact that Dr. von Schuschnigg said on his return that it had been the worst day of his life. At the afternoon meeting Dr. von Schuschnigg was presented by Herr Hitler with a list of demands, and was, at the same time, introduced to General von Bock, who, Herr Hitler said, would tell him exactly how long it would take for German troops to occupy Austria. A copy of this document is not available, but I gather that, apart from the provisions mentioned in the succeeding paragraph, it included the replacement of General Jansa, Chief of Staff, by General Böhme, the early opening of the talks between the General Staffs of the two armies, the appointment of Dr. Wolf, who was soon to be the last Foreign Minister, as head of the press, the appointment of Dr. Fischböck as adviser to the Minister of Commerce, and various economic arrangements. It seems possible that it also contained an undertaking to denounce the Treaty of Saint-Germain. Dr. von Schuschnigg signed this document under the military threat with which it was presented, and brought it back to Vienna for the approval of the President.

9. Then followed three days of strenuous discussion, and it was not until the 16th February that the press published details of what had been arranged. There were four points: (1) That Dr. Seyss-Inquart should be appointed Minister of the Interior and Security; (2) that the Nazis should have the same freedom of assembly and movement as any of the other groups in the Patriotic Front, and that certain changes of personnel in the front would be made; (3) that a general amnesty would come into force at once (Dr. von Schuschnigg insisted on extending it to Socialists and Communists); and (4) that pensions would be restored to those who had been deprived of them for political reasons. The Austrian Government declared, at the same time, that

this was all that would be announced before Herr Hitler's speech on the 20th February. I have since been informed by a reliable Italian source that the above did not cover all that Dr. von Schuschnigg had put his signature to, and it seems possible that Dr. von Schuschnigg, under pressure perhaps from Herr Miklas and other strong-minded Austrians, decided to regard the Berchtesgaden meeting as a bad dream, to put into force at once certain of the undertakings to which he had agreed, and to deal with the remainder in a gradual Austrian way. He maintained his faith in Dr. Seyss-Inquart as a practising Catholic, and he does not seem to have appreciated that, by handing over security to a man who, as it subsequently transpired, was actually a member of the Nazi party, and therefore took his orders from party headquarters, he had made his own position as Chancellor very difficult. He no doubt hoped that the retention of Dr. Skubl as State-Secretary for Security would provide an adequate brake on Dr. Seyss-Inquart if the latter felt inclined to go too far in placating the Nazis. The immediate execution of all the Berchtesgaden demands would have meant that Dr. von Schuschnigg might have retained his position as Chancellor for perhaps six months at the most, and would then have had to hand over the reins to Dr. Seyss-Inquart. It was, it is said, contemplated that Dr. von Schuschnigg should succeed Herr Miklas as President in October. This was an arrangement which would have preserved, for a time at least, some shreds of Austrian independence and which the Austrian Nazis themselves would have wished. The other alternative was that Dr. von Schuschnigg should resign at once, but he felt it was his duty to stay; it was contrary to his character and traditions to retire at a moment when things were more difficult than ever, and I think he must have argued with himself that it was his duty to remain at his post and save his defeat (before *force majeure*) at Berchtesgaden from becoming a rout. So he remained and made up his mind to fight, confident that he had the majority of the country behind him.

10. Herr Hitler delivered his big speech in the Reichstag on the 20th February, but his reference to the Berchtesgaden Agreement was a considerable disappointment to the Austrian Government. Although he referred to it as a reconciliation, he made no mention of the independence of Austria. The Austrian press, however, no doubt acting on instructions, regarded the reference which he had made to the agreement of the 11th July, 1936, as a re-affirmation of his recognition of the independence of Austria and of the principle of non-interference in her internal affairs, including Austrian national socialism. It was noteworthy that Mr. Eden's resignation on the same day was given equal prominence in several Austrian newspapers.

11. Dr. von Schuschnigg decided that he would be master in his own house, as long as it was his. Two days after Herr Hitler's speech he announced that no political meetings would be held in Austria for four weeks; the object of this measure was stated to be in order to ensure the tranquil execution of the Berchtesgaden Agreement, with the object of uniting all the forces in Austria who desired to share in the work of reconstruction. It was at this time that the rumours of a plebiscite were first heard. Dr. Seyss-Inquart, who had gone

to Berlin immediately after his appointment and had had interviews with the more important of the German leaders, including Herr Himmler, was reported to have brought back with him the demand for a plebiscite. His Majesty's Minister reported in his telegram No. 39 of the 23rd February that this report was untrue. The Patriotic Front had suggested a plebiscite, but the idea had been rejected as impracticable, and Mr. Palairer concluded this telegram with the remark that without support from outside, Austrian independence might be destroyed at any moment by a move from Berlin.

12. On the 24th February Dr. von Schuschnigg delivered a remarkably vigorous and downright speech, in which he emphasised both the German and Austrian character of Austria and her desire to live in agreement with Germany; he claimed complete independence and sovereignty as admitted by Germany, declared that Austria must remain Austria, and appealed for unity at home with specially cordial references to the workers; in the course of his speech, the spirit of which may be judged from his using the expression 'thus far and no further' in regard to the Berchtesgaden meeting, he hinted that he might call on the Patriotic Front for their vote. He showed his fellow-German feeling by declaring that his Government was determined to co-operate 'in our modest but our own boundaries' in the future of the whole German people; the Berchtesgaden Agreement was a landmark of peace and it rested on the word and the personality of the Führer of the German Reich. Subsequent events have proved what this word was worth.

13. Thereafter the slide began. Dr. Seyss-Inquart got busy. A party officer from Germany was attached to him, and he proceeded at once to show that a new régime was being established in Austria. Trouble broke out in Styria which almost amounted to a revolt. He went to Graz and gave the Nazis there permission to wear the swastika. Dr. von Schuschnigg refused to approve his action, but it was not long before he could not prevent the wearing of the swastika by those who wished throughout Austria. The developments at Graz showed that the Province of Styria was almost completely Nazi.

14. On the 2nd March it was announced that the Patriotic Front would conduct a campaign of meetings during the next three weeks under the motto: 'With Schuschnigg for Austria' on a larger scale than ever before, and that there would be in all about 3,000 demonstrations. On the following evening it was announced that the meetings would be comparatively small. This change of arrangement may have been due to the intervention of Berlin, or it may well have been that Dr. Seyss-Inquart was not consulted before the first announcement was made and that he vetoed it at once with Berlin's support. The incident was an indication of how the wind was blowing. One of the newly appointed Nazi officials of the Patriotic Front was able to make a public speech, in which he spoke openly as a Nazi to Nazis. Dr. Seyss-Inquart delivered a speech at Linz on the 5th March, in which he rejected the peace treaties as the basis of Austria's independence, recognised Herr Hitler as the leader of the German people, including Austrians, and left his hearers in [? no] doubt as to whether they could wear the swastika or not. This speech was one of the most incomprehensible utterances of the many

which have been delivered in Austria in recent years. It did show, however, that it was practically impossible for Dr. Seyss-Inquart to maintain his equilibrium between nazism and Austrian patriotism, and the circumstances attending the meeting were reported by His Majesty's Minister to be very ominous; some streets in Linz were, for example, lined by S.S. troops in uniform.

15. Dr. von Schuschnigg clearly could not allow this state of affairs to continue unchecked. The situation was slipping too rapidly from his control. The economic life of the country was at a standstill. Nazi propaganda was being vigorously pursued with the object of reaching its culmination on 'German Day,' announced for the 27th March. So Dr. von Schuschnigg decided to adopt the suggestion which he had already rejected as dangerous and hold a plebiscite. It was a last despairing attempt to save Austria's independence. Dr. von Schuschnigg, as has been stated above, never believed—and I had this almost at first-hand last October—that German troops would march into Austria. Having made up his mind to hold a plebiscite, he could not be turned from this course. He sent an emissary to Signor Mussolini on Monday, the 7th March, without informing the Italian Minister here. Signor Mussolini, as your Lordship is aware, strongly advised Dr. von Schuschnigg not to hold a plebiscite. On the morning of the 9th March the Italian Minister had an interview with Dr. Guido Schmidt about other matters, in the course of which Dr. Guido Schmidt told him casually that the Chancellor had decided to hold a plebiscite on the following Sunday, the 13th March. Signor Ghigi enquired what Dr. Seyss-Inquart thought about that. Dr. Schmidt replied that he had not yet been told, and that the Chancellor would, in fact, make the announcement that night at Innsbruck. Signor Ghigi suggested that it was a dangerous proceeding to decide on a plebiscite without discussing it with the Minister for Security, to which Dr. Schmidt replied that Dr. Zernatto would inform Dr. Seyss-Inquart during the course of the afternoon.

16. At 4.30 p.m. on the same day (the 9th March) Dr. Schmidt informed His Majesty's Minister. Dr. von Schuschnigg delivered a forceful speech at Innsbruck that evening, in which he announced that a plebiscite would be held on Sunday, the 13th March. A decisive hour had, he said, come. All Austrians of either sex over 24 would be asked if they wished for 'a free, German, independent, social, Christian and undivided Austria, for peace and work and equal rights for all who confess their allegiance to people and fatherland.' It seems clear that no advice could have deterred Dr. von Schuschnigg from his object, especially as he had assurances from the Governors of all the provinces, except Styria, that there would be a majority in his favour.

17. On the following day, the 10th March, Dr. Seyss-Inquart and Dr. Glaise-Horstenau protested vigorously to Dr. von Schuschnigg, and claimed that his action in announcing the plebiscite was illegal and unconstitutional. They contended that only the President could make an announcement of that kind, and Dr. Seyss-Inquart, as Minister of the Interior and Security, pointed out that it would be impossible to prepare proper lists of voters in the brief interval before Sunday, especially as no elections had been held in



Austria for many years. Dr. von Schuschnigg stuck to his guns, and the Patriotic Front proceeded rapidly with its arrangements, in some cases, it is to be feared, with more haste than discretion. For example, a special sheet of the 'Reichpost' was, I understand, issued during the morning, which declared that although the minimum age for electors was, as announced by Dr. von Schuschnigg and as laid down in the Austrian Constitution of 1934, 24, this would not apply to members of the Patriotic Front. This sheet was, however, hastily suppressed and confiscated, and I have been unable to obtain a copy. The Patriotic Front had been making a collection in Vienna for the expenses of the plebiscite secretly, and I am informed more than 4½ million Schillinge fell into the hands of the German authorities when they seized the offices of the Patriotic Front. The Jews had subscribed not only individually but also as a community, and one of the main objects of the German authorities here during the past weeks has been to obtain a copy of the list of those who subscribed. In spite of the many residences and offices which they have searched I understand that they have so far been unsuccessful. The Germans have declared that the offices of the Patriotic Front in Graz which they searched contained papers proving that the plebiscite returns were going to be faked. There is now, of course, no means of disproving this.

18. Herr Hitler has given his own criticism of the plebiscite and his reasons for objecting to it, and it is unnecessary to discuss them here. Dr. von Schuschnigg, I should say, reasoned as follows: He had put a question to which the Austrian Nazis could, in view of the 11th July, 1936, agreement, have replied in the affirmative. If they had, the world, as Herr Hitler himself has admitted, would have taken the result of the plebiscite to be a justification of the existing régime in Austria—in other words, a reaffirmation by self-determination of her independence. If the Nazis had decided to vote against, the result would still have been a **majority** for Dr. von Schuschnigg, and the same would have been the result if they had abstained. Moreover, no one knows accurately the number of electors in Austria over the age of 24 and the Austrian authorities would have had a certain possibility for juggling with the figures. In any of three cases the result would therefore have been a triumph for Dr. von Schuschnigg. The latter could, moreover, have tried to justify a snap-plebiscite on the ground that only thus could a comparatively free plebiscite be held in Austria. But his great miscalculation was that he did not anticipate that Herr Hitler would set his troops in march. It was, however, clear before the evening of the 10th March that Herr Hitler would not allow the plebiscite to be held, and, in fact, there is reason to believe that the order to march was given to some German units in the course of the day. Every precaution was, in fact, taken, even to the extent of ordering some units to take no food during the next forty-eight hours so that in the case of actual fighting, abdominal wounds would be less deadly.

19. On Friday, the 11th March, the German Government closed the German-Austrian frontier. Rumours of a postponement of the plebiscite were circulated by the Austrian Nazis and officially denied. Dr. Seyss-Inquart and Dr. Glaise-Horstenau presented an ultimatum to Dr. von



Schuschnigg, and told him that, unless he called off the plebiscite, the Nazis would refrain from voting and could not be restrained from causing serious disturbances during the voting. Dr. von Schuschnigg relented to the extent of offering to hold a second plebiscite later on with regular voting-lists and in the meantime offered to make it clear that voters might vote 'Yes' for his policy, but 'No' for Schuschnigg. This was referred to Herr Hitler, but was not sufficient. (He had already told Dr. Glaise-Horstenau that the holding of a plebiscite represented defeat for him and that he could not allow it.) The German Chargé d'Affaires and the German military attaché appeared at the Federal Chancery and ordered the plebiscite to be called off; a time-limit was set, at which German troops would be ordered, if necessary, to march in. The subsequent events are within your Lordship's knowledge from the telegrams which His Majesty's Minister had the honour to address to you. Dr. von Schuschnigg agreed to cancel the plebiscite. His resignation was then demanded. He finally appealed to His Majesty's Government for advice. He resigned under the threat of military action and announced his decision on the wireless. (A translation of his announcement is enclosed herein.) The President refused to accept the ultimatum that he should appoint a predominantly Nazi Cabinet and the German troops were then given the order to march in. Dr. Seyss-Inquart announced on the wireless that he was still Minister of the Interior, and that German troops were marching into Austria and that no resistance would be offered. He can no doubt claim that, as the responsible Minister, he invited the German Government to send in troops to maintain order. He subsequently, I learn from a reliable source, relented and told the German Government that it was unnecessary to despatch troops as the country was perfectly quiet and orderly. He was told that it was too late as the troops were already crossing the frontier. I have since learnt from a most confidential, but unimpeachable, source that Dr. Seyss-Inquart had, in fact, been informed by telephone from Germany at 2.45 p.m. that the troops were on the march and would reach the Austrian frontier by midnight. I have also heard that Dr. Seyss-Inquart made the remark in the course of the day that Herr Hitler was determined to absorb Austria, even if 10 million lives were lost in the course of his doing so.

20. Before passing from Friday, the 11th March, it is necessary to record an important event which took place on that day. Dr. von Schuschnigg had been, for some time, in negotiation with the leaders of the former Socialists and matters had, on that day, reached the stage that a special department for the Socialists had been created within the Patriotic Front (thus putting them on an equality with the Nazis); they had definitely decided to support Dr. von Schuschnigg in the plebiscite and, in fact, the workers had come out openly in the streets. Dr. Richard Schmitz, the Mayor of Vienna, is believed to have issued arms in considerable numbers for the protection of the Rathaus in the event of disturbances and also for use in case the Nazis in Vienna should get out of hand. Dr. Schmitz was one of the first to be arrested and it is expected that he will be tried for treason. In Nazi circles in Vienna there seems to be even stronger resentment against him for taking the action which

I have described than against any of the other supporters of Dr. von Schuschnigg.

21. It was not until 1.20 a.m. on Saturday, the 12th March, that Dr. Seyss-Inquart's appointment by the President as Federal Chancellor and the members of his Cabinet were announced. The delay is perhaps indicative of Herr Miklas's stubborn opposition. In regard to its composition, it is only necessary to say that the majority of the Ministers were members of the Nazi party. Dr. Seyss-Inquart, Dr. Glaise-Horstenau, Dr. Neumayr (the Minister of Finance) and Dr. Skubl (the State Secretary for Security) were the only members of Dr. von Schuschnigg's Cabinet who were retained, and Dr. Skubl was relieved of his functions within forty-eight hours. The German authorities were not slow in taking possession of all the offices in Vienna, including, of course, the Federal Chancery and police headquarters. There was little time for documents to be destroyed, and much valuable evidence must have fallen into their hands. The thorough preparation is shown by the fact that most of the newspapers which appeared that morning had already been censored, and that the president of the Austrian wireless received orders at 7 o'clock in the morning to send his official car to a certain address. Meanwhile, troops had been crossing the frontier by train and road, and Herr Hitler himself arrived at Linz at 8 o'clock in the evening, where he was met by Dr. Seyss-Inquart as Federal Chancellor. In his speech of welcome the latter declared that article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain had been triumphantly declared to be unworkable.

22. On the following day an official announcement was made to the effect that the Federal President, at the request of the Federal Chancellor, had laid down his functions, which, in accordance with the Constitution, fell to the Federal Chancellor, Dr. Seyss-Inquart. This was followed by the announcement, signed by Dr. Seyss-Inquart and the members of his Cabinet, that Austria was a province of the German Reich and that a plebiscite would be held on the 10th April. Throughout the day German troop-carrying aeroplanes were arriving at Aspern at the rate of fifty an hour; German aeroplanes were flying low over Vienna showering leaflets; and the city had already the appearance of an occupied town.

23. On the evening of Monday, the 14th March, Herr Hitler made his triumphant entry into Vienna amid tremendous scenes of enthusiasm. He returned as a conqueror to the capital of the land of his birth, to whose Art Academy he had, as a young man, in spite of forging his education certificate, been refused admission 'on account of lack of talent'.

24. On the following day, Tuesday, the 15th March, Herr Hitler delivered a speech and held a parade of troops before leaving Vienna in the late evening. Dr. Seyss-Inquart ceased to be Federal Chancellor and received the title of [Statthalter]. Dr. Wolf, the last Foreign Minister of Austria, after three days of expectation of a happy future, received, at 10.30 a.m., a message saying that Herr von Ribbentrop would take over from him in half an hour and giving him, at the same time, the text of the words of pleasure with which he was to hand over his office to the Foreign Minister of the Reich. The country

had been occupied and taken over with at least the semblance of legality and respect for constitutional forms.

25. The chief Austrian leaders were placed under arrest. Legions of S.A., S.S., and secret police (the latter soon amounted to some 16,000) descended on Vienna. And the subsequent proceedings followed the lines which were to be expected from the sudden introduction of such a régime. The Gestapo atmosphere was at once created. Having seized the banks and public offices and placed everyone of political importance under arrest, the new authorities at once devoted themselves to finding all the currency and valuables possible in Vienna, and this is still one of their main concerns. The National Bank was a rich booty, but the amount in private hands must have been very considerable. Jewish shops were, of course, raided, and by the 15th March no one had any excuse for not knowing what shops were Jewish. (They are now no longer labelled.) The German Aryan laws were at once introduced, and many Jews suffered bodily as well as mental hurt. Marks were soon circulating and Schillinge are already becoming scarce. The speed and thoroughness with which all this was effected gave evidence of long and careful preparation.

26. So ended Austria—the Austria of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, whose independence was declared by that treaty to be inalienable otherwise than with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations.

27. What the future will bring, it is difficult to foresee. Austrians of the old school felt that their country had really ended with the cessation of hostilities in 1918. For this class, most of them Legitimists, the future holds out little hope. The workers in the towns and the peasants on the land will no doubt have greater opportunity for work, and unemployment will, as in Germany, to a large extent, cease. The German authorities lost no time in evincing the greatest interest in the welfare of the workers, and it seems that it will be one of their main objects to ensure their willing support. The measures which they have taken in this direction I have already had the honour to report in separate despatches or telegrams. The Jews will be oppressed as they have been in Germany and will be given no opportunity of taking any part in public life and very little of achieving anything in commercial life. The leaders of the Church have accepted the inevitable and have willingly, or unwillingly, exhorted their flocks to the effect that their duty in the plebiscite is to cast their votes in the affirmative. There is little doubt about the enthusiasm of the youth of the country for the Nazi régime, and many Austrians consider that the future holds out much greater hope for the lower-middle classes, owing to the larger opportunities for work and activity which exist in the great unit of which Austria is now a part. Vienna is already, in appearance at least, a German town. The enthusiasm which greeted Herr Hitler on his arrival seemed, however, to evaporate with his departure. Gauleiter Bürckel has announced that he hopes that the 'Gemütlichkeit' which he had already remarked during his brief stay in Vienna would return after the hard days of work which must precede the plebiscite were over. It seems possible from this time that the German authorities will wish to

maintain something of the distinctive character of Vienna and perhaps of the Austrian countryside. For the moment, however, it must be said that the spire of St. Stephen's towers over a city which has become Germanised almost in a night, and that the city which served as the bulwark of civilisation against the Turks in 1683 has been converted into the eastern bulwark of a country dominated by a race whose cultural and philosophical outlook is the negation of many of the principles for which civilisation stands.

28. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Berlin and Rome.

I have, &c.

W. H. B. MACK

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 132

*Translation of the Text of Dr. von Schuschnigg's Radio Announcement of his Resignation*

To-day has confronted us with a difficult and decisive situation. I am authorised to report to the Austrian people in regard to the events of the day.

The German Government has delivered to the Federal President an ultimatum with a time-limit, in accordance with which the Federal President would have to appoint as Federal Chancellor a candidate proposed to him and to settle the Government in accordance with the proposals of the German Government; otherwise, the march of German troops was contemplated for this hour. I declare before the world that the news which was spread in Austria that there would be unrest among the workers, that streams of blood would have flowed, that the Government were not masters of the situation and could not of themselves have maintained order, are inventions from A to Z.

The Federal President authorises me to announce to the Austrian people that we yield to force because we are not willing to shed German blood at any price, not even in this serious hour; we have ordered our army, in case the German troops enter, to withdraw without any appreciable resistance, without resistance [*sic*],<sup>1</sup> and to await the decisions of the next hours. The Federal President has entrusted General Schilhawsky, the General-Inspector of Troops, with the command of the army. Further directions to the army will be given through him.

And so I take leave in this hour of the Austrian people, with a German word and wish from my heart: God protect Austria.

<sup>1</sup> Here Dr. Schuschnigg corrected himself. Cf. No. 36.

No. 133

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 49 Telegraphic [C 2634/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 9, 1938, 2.00 p.m.

Your telegram No. 63.<sup>1</sup>

1. The procedure implied in your telegram under reference does not seem to correspond entirely with that outlined by Czechoslovak Minister to Sir A.

<sup>1</sup> No. 127.

Cadogan on April 5 (see Mr. Roberts's letter to Mr. Troutbeck of April 5).<sup>2</sup> It is not quite clear whether the scheme which the Czechoslovak Government intend to show us will have been discussed with the Henlein Party, or whether it will be in the form of proposals which the Czechoslovak Government intend to put before that Party.

2. In the former event, they would be merely keeping us informed of their negotiations: in the latter, they would presumably be consulting us and hoping for some expression of our view or advice in advance of any negotiations with Henlein.

3. His Majesty's Government do not possess enough knowledge of the complexities of the Sudeten German problem and of its interaction on Czechoslovak internal politics to adjudicate on the merits of any solution that the Czechoslovak Government may propose. To do so would require His Majesty's Government to send out a special investigator to take evidence on the spot—a course which in present circumstances I do not favour. Therefore, while anxious to help the Czechoslovak Government wherever possible, I cannot say whether His Majesty's Government would be able to pronounce definitely upon the justice or expediency of any proposals. If, however, the Czechoslovak Government wish to take us into their confidence, we should certainly endeavour to formulate our views frankly, within the limits of our ability to do so, but our ability will necessarily be restricted if we are not at the same time in possession of the views and wishes of the Henlein Party.

4. I cannot at this stage say whether His Majesty's Government would be prepared to give support in Berlin to any specific proposals. To my mind the essential point is that the Czechoslovak Government should do their utmost to reach a comprehensive agreement with the Henlein Party, and if they care to take his Majesty's Government into their confidence, I will do what I can to promote success of such negotiations at any stage.

5. If you think there is any danger of a misunderstanding, you should speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on these lines.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This letter forwarded Sir A. Cadogan's record of the conversation. See No. 135, note 5.

## No. 134

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 13)*

*No. 68 Saving: Telegraphic [C 2989/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 11, 1938

[1.] On the receipt this week of proposals of Czechoslovak Government for settling Sudeten question further active consideration will no doubt be given to enlist 'all the resources of diplomacy in the cause of peace'. It may therefore be convenient for you to have in this Saving telegram a summary of essential points of a despatch<sup>1</sup> which I am submitting by bag.

<sup>1</sup> No. 140. This summary is printed, in addition to the despatch, since the argument is stated in a slightly different way.



2. Vitally important as a far-reaching Sudeten German settlement is, the whole problem of Czechoslovak relations for which a solution must be found consists of two inter-related parts, one internal, the other external.

3. The Sudeten Germans may insist on a change of Czechoslovak foreign policy as a condition of their appeasement, so that in this indirect way a peaceful solution of internal part of problem, if it can be achieved, may bring about a solution of the external part. Similarly if Germany can be satisfied in regard to Czechoslovak external relations the sting will be taken out of Sudeten German question as it has been temporarily at least from German minority questions in Poland and the Italian Tyrol. Germany might in this manner become disposed to help rather than hinder an internal settlement. On the other hand failure to solve either part of general problem will prejudice a solution of the other part so that the two react on each other. Great attention is now rightly being devoted to the internal part but if we wish to assist in attainment of a lasting solution of the whole problem and in thus laying the spectre of war, I doubt for above reasons whether we should be content to allow the external part of this problem to solve itself.

4. In considering this second part it seems to me that there are three choices for Czechoslovakia:—

(a) The maintenance of present situation. In the long run, I believe this to be untenable for reasons given in my Saving telegram No. 17.<sup>2</sup>

(b) Neutrality.

(c) Inclusion in German orbit.

5. If nothing is done I anticipate that (c) will be eventual result. The process of reaching it may be painful and dangerous for peace of the world. In the long run the middle course of (b) may be no more tenable than (a). I feel nevertheless that it would be worth while to try for it because intrinsically it would be better than (c) but still more because even if a neutral position cannot be held the offer of it if made in the early future should greatly ease tension and represents a real concession. It is an asset which like so many originating in the peace treaties (e.g. reparations, the Saar and disarmament) will only waste if not capitalized and may even turn to Dead Sea fruit. The case of Austria, while dissimilar in many other respects, provided an illustration. The earlier the concessions in the direction of an 'Anschluss' the greater would have been the measure of independence retained.

6. In moving towards neutralization Czechoslovakia would no doubt be expected by Germany to abandon her continuance of the Russian alliance at an early stage and at a later one, it may be, also her French alliance. From German Minister's assurances mentioned in my telegram No. 47<sup>3</sup> it would seem that latter might not be required at any rate at first and that Germany would be content with an arrangement similar to that with Poland. Governments in France may themselves later if not already be increasingly inclined to regard Czechoslovak alliance as more of a liability than an asset. (See, for

<sup>2</sup> No. 86.

<sup>3</sup> No. 99.

example, M. Flandin's views as reported in Paris Saving telegram No. 211<sup>4</sup> and views of French Chargé d'Affaires reported in paragraph 4 of my despatch No. 370<sup>5</sup> last year.) Although Franco-British collaboration is very desirable, I believe in any case a key position is held by His Majesty's Government as Czechoslovak Government doubt whether France would give them effective military support unless backed by Great Britain.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. M. Flandin's views were (i) that Czechoslovakia was impossible to defend, (ii) that, for this reason, it would be folly to attempt to defend it, (iii) that the surrender of Czechoslovakia to Germany would most likely be effected by economic strangulation, which Great Britain and France could not prevent.

<sup>5</sup> For correspondence on this question, see the preceding volume of this Collection.

### No. 135

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 727 [C 2770/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 11, 1938*

Sir,

In my despatch No. 581<sup>1</sup> of the 22nd March I instructed you to explain to the French Government the views of His Majesty's Government upon the situation created by the absorption of Austria in the German Reich, and the conclusions which they had drawn in view of the possibility of German action in Czechoslovakia similar to that taken in Austria. In the course of the communication which you made to the French Government, you were instructed to urge that the question of the German minority in Czechoslovakia was one for joint and early consideration between the French Government and His Majesty's Government.

2. I have given further consideration to this most difficult question, and I shall be glad if you will now speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the sense of the present despatch. You should not on this occasion leave any written statement of your remarks, though the Minister of Foreign Affairs may, of course, if he wishes, take whatever notes he thinks necessary.

3. The present situation in Czechoslovakia seems to me to be one of considerable danger. The incorporation of Austria in the Reich has had a powerful effect upon the German minority in Czechoslovakia. The various sections of this minority are uniting more completely than ever before under the leadership of Herr Henlein. Feeling is running high among them; their confidence is growing, and with it the character of their demands. On the other side of the frontier, German opinion is in a state of exaltation, and the momentum generated by the spectacular success of the Austrian operation may well carry the German Government forward to further operations, where the risk of disturbance to the peace of the world would be much greater than in the case of Austria. In these circumstances it might require only one

<sup>1</sup> No. 106.

violent incident in the Sudeten German country to start an outbreak which might end in war.

4. In this dangerous situation, His Majesty's Government feel that every step that is possible should be taken to avoid an outbreak which, in present circumstances, might carry with it a very considerable risk for both France and Great Britain.

5. I have already in my despatch No. 581 of the 22nd March and in my telegram No. 95<sup>2</sup> of the 23rd March explained how unfavourable, in present circumstances, would be the military situation, not only of Czechoslovakia, but of France and Great Britain, in the event of a German attack upon Czechoslovakia, in consequence of which France might decide to take the offensive against Germany, and as a further consequence of which Great Britain might subsequently become involved in the ensuing war. It is desirable that you should impress these considerations once more upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and this for two reasons.

6. In the first place I have noticed a tendency not only in the press, but also in official quarters, both in France and Czechoslovakia, to give too broad an interpretation to the statement made in paragraph 6 of the enclosure in my despatch No. 581 of the 22nd March, and repeated in the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on the 24th March, that 'the inexorable pressure of facts . . . might prove more powerful than formal pronouncements, and in that event it would be well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute, would almost immediately be involved'. A contingency which was thus stated to be in the nature of a probability, and is, in fact, no more than that, is in some quarters being far too readily assumed to be in the nature of a certainty. It would be unfortunate if any such interpretation should gain currency in the minds of the French Government, and if this is, indeed, the impression which they have gained from the statement to which I have referred above, I trust that you will take immediate steps to correct it.

7. In the second place, any such misconception of the military situation, and of the probability of action by His Majesty's Government, whether on the part of either the French or the Czechoslovak Government, would increase the danger of an already dangerous situation. Unless the French and Czechoslovak Governments can be brought to face the realities of the present position, it is to be feared that the Czechoslovak Government will not realise the necessity of making drastic concessions to the German minority, but will content themselves with superficial measures which, though they might have been adequate in the past, will no longer meet the case; while the French Government for their part will fail to appreciate the necessity of using their undoubted influence in Prague to promote a supreme effort on the part of the Czechoslovak Government to find a solution to a problem on the settlement of which the continued existence of Czechoslovakia as an independent State within her present frontiers may well depend. Without accepting as accurate

<sup>2</sup> No. 107.

in all respects the report of M. Sauerwein on his recent tour of investigation in Czechoslovakia, as described in your telegram No. 213, Saving,<sup>3</sup> of the 28th March, I feel that there is much truth in what he says, and that the description which he gives of the present situation is not without good foundation.

8. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government feel that it is of the greatest importance that every effort should be made by the Czechoslovak Government to reach a settlement of the German minority problem in negotiation with the representatives of that minority, and that the French Government and His Majesty's Government should use all their influence in Prague, preferably in concert, in furtherance of such a settlement. It is essential, in my view, that the Czechoslovak Government should reach such a settlement by direct negotiation with Herr Henlein or with those who can speak for him, and that the negotiations should cover the whole field of the problem and have as their object a comprehensive and lasting settlement.

9. It appears from reports received from His Majesty's Minister at Prague (see his telegram No. 59<sup>4</sup> of the 2nd April and subsequent telegrams) and from statements made by the Czechoslovak Minister in London (see my despatch No. 683<sup>5</sup> of the 6th April) that the Czechoslovak Government have been in touch with certain representatives of the Sudeten German party, and that they are at work on a plan which is to be communicated to His Majesty's Government and the French Government. These developments are in some degree encouraging, but they need not cause us to modify the plan of action which I have in mind, namely, that we should make an immediate communication to the French Government in the sense of the present despatch; that we should, as early as possible, make the proposed communication to the Czechoslovak Government and ask them to keep us informed of developments; that we should thereafter continue to watch the situation very closely and be ready at any appropriate moment and in any appropriate manner to use our influence to assist to secure a settlement.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps reported that M. Sauerwein (a well-known French journalist) considered (i) that M. Benes had 'no intention of taking any immediate action to put an end to the persecution by the smaller Czech police officials of the various minorities in general and of the Sudeten Deutsch in particular', (ii) that these Czech officials did not understand that 'persistence in this conduct' might 'at any moment precipitate an incident which may serve to bring about the armed intervention of Germany. . . . M. Sauerwein said that in every way the Germans were still treated as a minority who must be taught their place and were persecuted by the lesser officials in a way which had to be seen to be believed.' M. Sauerwein deplored 'the fact that the French Government have not insisted on the Czechs setting their house in order before undertaking to march to their assistance'. He thought that M. Benes believed 'that the declarations of France and Russia, and the attitude of His Majesty's Government as defined in the Prime Minister's recent speech in the House of Commons, are sufficient to frighten away Germany and that therefore he need do nothing to conciliate the German minority'.

<sup>4</sup> No. 122.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. This despatch (to Paris) reported a conversation between the Czechoslovak Minister and Sir A. Cadogan on April 5, at which the Czechoslovak Minister stated that his Government had been in touch with certain Henlein representatives and had presented them with an outline scheme of settlement.

10. I have instructed you to put these considerations before the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the hope that the French Government will see their way to make similar representations to the Czechoslovak Government; and I shall be glad if you will report to me the view which the Minister for Foreign Affairs takes of this proposal.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 136

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 12)*

*No. 433 [C 2924/1941/18]*

PARIS, April 11, 1938

My Lord,

With reference to your secret despatch No. 581<sup>1</sup> of the 22nd March, and to your telegrams No. 95 and No. 96<sup>2</sup> of the 23rd March, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of an aide-mémoire from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in reply to the aide-mémoire which I handed to M. Paul-Boncour on the 24th March, in explanation of the view taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of the situation created by the absorption of Austria in the German Reich, and of the possibility of German action in Czechoslovakia.

2. It will be observed that the French Government renew their previous undertaking to come to the assistance of Great Britain, and that they welcome the suggestion of contact between the British and French air staffs, which they trust will be established as soon as possible. They recognise that the British obligations to Czechoslovakia, are those only which are incumbent upon all States members of the League, but they note with interest that Great Britain may nevertheless feel called upon to intervene in order to restore peace and re-establish international order.

3. While understanding the reluctance of His Majesty's Government to define their attitude in hypothetical circumstances, and while welcoming the remarks made in this connexion by the Prime Minister on the 24th March, the French Government fear that the uncertainty in which international public opinion is left as regards the British intentions may limit the preventive effect of British solidarity in the interests of the maintenance of European peace. For her own part, France will never resort to arms save in a just cause, in fulfilment of undertakings publicly entered into, and to ensure respect for international law.

4. The French Government do not doubt what would be the attitude of His Majesty's Government in the face of a crisis in which the fate of Europe and the safeguard of democratic liberties were at stake. But this conviction will never induce any French Government whatsoever to take hasty or avoidable decisions. The French Government agree that nothing should be left

<sup>1</sup> No. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 107 and 108.



undone to eliminate occasions of friction or conflict which may arise from the existence of the German minority in Czechoslovakia: and they are ready unreservedly to collaborate with His Majesty's Government to this end, provided always that care be taken to spare the susceptibilities of the Czechoslovak Government where questions relating to its sovereignty are concerned (exception always made of the rights of the League Council). The French Government think that there is at the present time no problem on which Franco-British collaboration can more usefully be exercised, and they look forward to the exchange of views on this subject suggested by His Majesty's Government.

5. But any action in this sense cannot dispense the two Governments from considering certain grave eventualities, and the views expressed on this score on behalf of His Majesty's Government have been noted with special interest. The French Government, fully conscious of the difficulties of defending Czechoslovakia effectively against an aggression, would prefer to reserve this question for the confidential study of the competent authorities in the two countries. This defence will be facilitated by the co-operation of other countries in Central Europe or the Danube basin. The French Government firmly believe that such co-operation will be obtainable only to the extent to which the States concerned come to be convinced in the next few weeks of the common determination of France and Great Britain to unite in order to ensure respect for international law and for the right of nations to be independent, outside any political or economic hegemony.

I have, &c.

ERIC PHIPPS

#### ENCLOSURE IN No. 136

##### *Aide-mémoire*

Le Gouvernement français a vivement apprécié la franchise et la netteté des vues que l'Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne a été chargé d'exposer, le 24 mars, au Ministre français des Affaires étrangères. Avec la même franchise, il croit devoir présenter les observations qu'appelle, de sa part, cet exposé.

2. Le Gouvernement français, qui n'a jamais douté de la volonté britannique de faire honneur à ses engagements, n'en a pas moins été sensible à la manière dont, aussi bien dans l'aide-mémoire dont Sir Eric Phipps a donné lecture que dans le discours prononcé le 24 mars par le chef du Gouvernement britannique à la Chambre des Communes, a été réaffirmée la validité des obligations contractées par le Royaume-Uni à l'égard de la France.

Dans le même esprit, le Gouvernement de la République tient à saisir cette occasion de réaffirmer sa fidélité à l'engagement d'assistance envers la Grande-Bretagne qui résulte pour la France des lettres échangées à Londres le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1936<sup>1</sup> et que M. Yvon Delbos a renouvelé à la tribune du Parlement le 4 décembre 1936.

<sup>1</sup> For the text of this exchange of letters see Cmd. 5149 of 1936.

Il se félicite d'une manière toute particulière du souci marqué par le Gouvernement britannique de voir intervenir de nouveaux arrangements concernant les conditions techniques dans lesquelles, en cas d'agression non provoquée, seraient exécutées les obligations contractées. Il sera donc heureux d'autoriser des contacts confidentiels entre états-majors des deux armées de l'air aussitôt que lui aura été faite la communication annoncée à ce sujet par Sir Eric Phipps; il souhaite que ces contacts puissent être établis à une date aussi rapprochée que possible.

3. Le Gouvernement britannique a été averti par une communication antérieure des conséquences que le Gouvernement de la République, avant même la réalisation de l'Anschluss, appréhendait d'un tel événement en ce qui concerne la Tchécoslovaquie. Il peut ainsi se rendre compte de l'intérêt avec lequel ont été accueillies les précisions que le Gouvernement britannique a bien voulu donner sur son attitude à l'égard de ce pays, précisions complétées, d'autre part, par les déclarations du Premier Ministre devant la Chambre des Communes.

4. Il est constant qu'à l'heure actuelle les obligations britanniques à l'égard de la Tchécoslovaquie ne diffèrent pas de celles qui incombent à tout État membre de la Société des Nations. Le Gouvernement français a donc noté avec intérêt que le Gouvernement britannique admet qu'en cette qualité il peut être amené à intervenir pour rétablir la paix ou restaurer l'ordre international au cas où une telle intervention lui paraîtrait opportune.

Conscient des nécessités et des traditions de politique impériale comme de politique intérieure auxquelles a fait allusion Sir Eric Phipps, le Gouvernement français ne saurait certes s'étonner que le Gouvernement britannique n'ait pas cru pouvoir fournir sur l'attitude qu'il adopterait, dans certaines éventualités, de plus complètes précisions. Il a d'autre part pleinement mesuré en s'en félicitant la portée des paroles prononcées sur ce sujet par le Premier Ministre dans son discours du 24 mars. Il lui sera cependant permis de regretter le fait que l'incertitude où demeurera l'opinion internationale sur les intentions anglaises puisse limiter l'effet préventif de la solidarité britannique en faveur du maintien de la paix européenne.

Fidèle, pour sa part, à son idéal de paix, la France ne recourra jamais aux armes que pour une cause juste, en exécution d'engagements publiquement contractés et pour assurer le respect de la loi internationale contractuellement fondée, et le Gouvernement français ne doute à aucun degré de l'attitude qu'adopterait le Gouvernement britannique en présence d'une crise dont l'enjeu serait le sort même de l'Europe et la sauvegarde de cette liberté démocratique qui, leur étant commune, a si puissamment contribué à sceller l'amitié des deux peuples, britannique et français.

5. Cette conviction ne saurait certes, en aucune circonstance, amener jamais un Gouvernement français, quel qu'il soit, à des décisions hâtives ou qui pussent être évitées. Pleinement d'accord en cela avec le Gouvernement britannique, le Gouvernement français estimera toujours qu'aucun effort ne doit être négligé pour faire disparaître les causes de friction ou de conflit que pourra engendrer l'existence de la minorité allemande de Tchécoslovaquie.

Il demeure à cet effet prêt à associer sans réserve sa vigilance et toute son activité à celles du Gouvernement britannique, toutes précautions devant d'ailleurs être prises pour ménager les susceptibilités du Gouvernement tchécoslovaque dans l'examen de questions qui relèvent de sa souveraineté propre, sous réserve des seuls droits reconnus au Conseil de la Société des Nations.

Il n'est pas, en tout cas, de problème à l'égard duquel la collaboration franco-britannique puisse s'exercer à l'heure actuelle plus utilement, et le Gouvernement de la République envisage avec la plus sincère faveur l'échange de vues qu'a suggéré à ce sujet Sir Eric Phipps.

6. L'action qui pourrait être exercée dans ce sens ne saurait d'ailleurs dispenser les deux Gouvernements d'envisager les graves éventualités auxquelles Sir Eric Phipps a fait d'autre part allusion, et c'est avec un intérêt particulier qu'il a été pris connaissance des remarques que l'Ambassadeur de Sa Majesté a formulées à ce sujet.

Pour sa part, le Gouvernement français, qui ne méconnaît nullement les difficultés d'une défense efficace de la Tchécoslovaquie contre une agression extérieure, préférerait réserver la question pour un examen confidentiel des autorités qualifiées des deux pays. Il se bornera donc ici à remarquer que cette défense sera plus facile dans la mesure où le concours d'autres pays de l'Europe centrale et de l'Europe danubienne pourra être obtenu. Or, ce concours même, il en a la ferme conviction, dépend essentiellement du sentiment qu'au cours des semaines à venir les États intéressés pourront acquérir de la volonté commune de la France et de l'Angleterre d'unir leurs efforts pour assurer en Europe le respect de la loi internationale et du droit des nations à l'indépendance, en dehors de toute hégémonie politique ou économique.

PARIS, le 9 avril 1938

### No. 137

*Mr. Mack (Vienna) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 19)*

*No. 110 [C 3139/2310/18]*

VIENNA, April 11, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to submit a report from the point of view of Austria on the 'free and secret' plebiscite which was held throughout Germany yesterday.

2. Since Herr Hitler announced his intention of holding a plebiscite, propaganda work has been carried on with feverish energy throughout Austria; the word 'feverish' is not an exaggerated epithet to apply to the general atmosphere of unnatural enthusiasm and tension which has prevailed here.

3. The chief tenor of this propaganda has been to impress on Austrians the fact that Herr Hitler has delivered their country from oppression and starvation and has made it part of a Reich flowing with milk and honey; the newspapers have even printed conversations between the German soldier and the

Austrian peasant, in which the latter says to the former: 'But how can you afford to give me all these sausages and this butter?' and the German soldier replies that such delights are only a part of the natural wealth overflowing from the economic heaven of the Third Reich.

4. This illusion was carefully strengthened by well-advertised soup-kitchens, trips to Germany organised by the 'Strength through Joy' Movement, and generous gifts from the Hermann Göring Fund. This last item was particularly effective, since the field-marshal is looked upon as the benevolent providence of the Four-Year Plan, a plan carefully hedged about with a mass of impressive statistics. One of the main objects of all this propaganda was to make certain of securing the Socialist vote, and, by promises of economic prosperity, to ensure the support of the peasants and industrial workers.

5. Behind this exterior of genial confidence which the authorities showed to the world could be felt a carefully suppressed but nevertheless insistent undercurrent of anxiety and nervousness. Herr Bürckel and his assistants were determined by hook or by crook to get an almost 100 per cent. vote, but they could not quite overcome an unpleasant feeling that something might go wrong.

6. To avert this they employed the three-fold method of exciting the faithful, throwing dust in the eyes of the doubtful, and intimidating or locking up the potentially inimical. Supervision of the doubtful voters was so strict that some who had not voted before 1 p.m. yesterday received a visit to remind them of their obligation to vote. A number of Communists and some Legitimists were put in prison, but I understand that arrangements were made for them to record their vote.

7. No Jew was allowed to vote, even if his name were, by mistake, included in the electoral lists. In this connexion it is worthy of note that, allowing for the natural increase since the last census, the number of confessing Jews in Austria must now be some 200,000. The number of people reckoned as Jews under the Aryan clause owing to their partially Jewish ancestry must, however, be put at well over half a million, and I should not be surprised if the figures were actually between 700,000 and 800,000.

8. There was very little danger of any 'No's' being polled yesterday; even leading Legitimists had resigned themselves to voting 'Yes,' as none of them believed that the ballot would be secret or that those who voted 'No' would be immune from vengeance afterwards. S.A. and S.S. men were to be seen everywhere; with aeroplanes flying overhead and German uniforms of all kinds crowding the pavements, the voters were very effectively impressed with the powerful presence of Germany's mailed fist. Potential abstainers from the poll were also deterred by the fact that each voter received a small metal badge bearing the Führer's head and the legend 'Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer' (one people, one Reich, one Leader) after registering his or her vote. The absence of such a badge from a person's lapel rendered him unpleasantly conspicuous.

9. There was a certain amount of enthusiasm in the centre of the town; yet it never seemed to reach the pinnacles of exaltation daily attained by the

press. In fact the applause, the songs of victory and shouts of triumph have now for some time had rather a hollow ring, when compared with the frenzied demonstrations of the first few days. The Viennese like novelty, but they very quickly get bored or disappointed, especially in present conditions when they see all the plums fall into the lap of an invading horde of Prussian officials.

10. Whatever might have been Vienna's innermost feelings, her external appearance yesterday left nothing to be desired by the organisers of the plebiscite; the whole town was a sea of swastikas, the monotony of their scarlet backgrounds only relieved here and there by an occasional touch of green or gold. Even the Iron Man on the top of the City Hall was not spared, and a vast swastika waved from his lance, which only once before bore a flag—on the 60th anniversary of Emperor Francis Joseph's accession.

11. The streets, and especially the Ring, were continuously crowded with people; a general good-natured enthusiasm prevailed, and nine men out of ten were wearing National Socialist emblems of one description or another; but the first frenzied orgy of salutes and 'Heil Hitler's' had already very noticeably subsided. Outside the Imperial Hotel, where Herr Hitler was staying, there was usually a small crowd of idlers; on Saturday afternoon, the eve of the plebiscite, there were some 2,000 people gathered there in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the Führer. Their long wait was rewarded first by a violent hail-storm, and, secondly, by the unexpected appearance of Cardinal Innitzer, who was greeted with whistles, cat-calls and boos, amid which even the word 'Swine-hound' was to be heard; he drove away amidst derisive laughter. Shortly afterwards Herr Hitler appeared at a window and was acclaimed with terrific enthusiasm.

12. The result of the plebiscite, 99·75 per cent. in favour of Herr Hitler, is mainly of interest in showing what can be achieved in a few weeks in a dictatorial State which desires to ascertain 'the will of the people.' A sense of the ridiculous might have made the percentage a little lower. Burgenland returned the highest percentage, Vienna and Vorarlberg the lowest. The results were announced on the wireless last night by Gauleiter Bürckel, who, asserting, not for the first time, that blood was always stronger than treaties, declared that German Austria had by this free and secret vote put the last nail in the coffin of Versailles and Saint-Germain.

13. How free and how secret this vote was may be judged by the following description given by one voter of the procedure employed in the polling booths: On entering, the voter was handed an open envelope, from which protruded the corner of the ballot-paper bearing the circle marked 'Yes.' One of the half-dozen uniformed S.S. men standing round then handed the voter a pencil, and, pointing to the 'Yes' circle, said 'That is where you make your cross!' If a voter made as if to take the ballot-paper out of the envelope and go into the curtained cubicle to record his vote, he was told that that was not necessary, and that he could make his cross where he was—that is to say in the middle of the room, surrounded by party officials. This farce completed, the envelope was then taken by an S.S. man, the ballot-paper was pushed inside, the flap closed but not gummed down, and the whole thing



dropped into an open wicker-sided basket standing on a table. Having thus made his free and secret choice the voter was then allowed to leave. I must, however, in fairness add that Mr. Ward Price told me to-day that he visited several booths, that the voters did enter the curtained cubicle, and that although they placed their envelopes open in the receptacles with open sides provided, the voting was in his view comparatively secret. He also admitted that if Dr. von Schuschnigg had held his proposed plebiscite he would have secured a large majority. The only comment which seems called for is that a plebiscite in a totalitarian or dictatorship State is a farce.

I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.

W. H. B. MACK

No. 138

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 52 Telegraphic [C 2770/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1938*

My telegram No. 42.<sup>1</sup>

I have now instructed His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris, in a despatch of which a copy comes to you by bag, to speak to the French Foreign Minister in strict confidence of the danger which I see in the present state of the Sudeten German question, and of necessity for every possible step to be taken to avoid an outbreak which might lead to war.

It is in the view of His Majesty's Government essential that the Czechoslovak Government should be brought to face the realities of the present situation and to realise the necessity of making wide concessions to the German minority rather than superficial measures which will no longer meet the case, and that the French Government should use their undoubted influence in Prague to promote a supreme effort on the part of the Czechoslovak Government to find a solution of the problem.

His Majesty's Ambassador will therefore urge that it is essential that the Czechoslovak Government should do their utmost to reach a settlement by direct negotiation with Herr Henlein or with those who can speak for him, and that the negotiations should cover the whole field of the problem and have as their object a comprehensive and lasting settlement; and he will propose that the French Government and His Majesty's Government should use their influence in Prague, preferably in concert, in furtherance of such a settlement.

The procedure which I have in mind is that the two Governments should as early as possible make a communication to the Czechoslovak Government in this sense, and ask them to keep us informed of developments; and that we should thereafter continue to watch the situation very closely and be

<sup>1</sup> No. 110.

ready at any appropriate moment and in any appropriate manner to use our influence to assist to secure a settlement.

His Majesty's Ambassador will express the hope that the French Government will be willing to make similar representations in Prague.

I had intended to send the foregoing to you for your own information only at the present stage, but in view of the delay which is likely to occur in arranging matters with the French Government, and of the fact that Dr. Benes appears to take a less accommodating line in regard to the Sudeten German question than his Prime Minister, it occurs to me that it might be useful if you could seek an early audience of the President in order to discuss the whole question of the German minority with him.

You could say that, as he was aware (see my telegram No. 42) His Majesty's Government were closely studying the question and were hoping before long to exchange views with the Czechoslovak Government. It would therefore be of assistance to His Majesty's Government, in clearing their minds, if he could give you an account of recent developments as he himself saw them and of the objectives which he had in view in the future steps which he was contemplating. This would give you an opportunity in the course of the interview to outline to him, on your own authority, the views which you anticipated His Majesty's Government would instruct you to express. In so doing, you would be guided by the contents of the present telegram, though you should not disclose that an approach had been made to the French Government by His Majesty's Government.

You will find further material for your conversation in my immediately succeeding telegram.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

### No. 139

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 53 Telegraphic [C 2770/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1938*

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

One of the dangers of the present situation, which I have instructed His Majesty's Ambassador to bring to the attention of the French Government, is the tendency not only in the press but also in official quarters both in France and in Czechoslovakia to give too broad an interpretation to the statement made in paragraph 6 of the enclosure in my despatch to Paris No. 581<sup>2</sup> and repeated in the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on 24th March about it being 'well within the bounds of probability that other countries, besides those which were parties to the original dispute,' might become involved. A contingency which is thus stated to be in the nature of a probability and is, in fact, no more than that, is, I fear, in some quarters being far too readily assumed to be in the nature

<sup>1</sup> No. 138.

<sup>2</sup> No. 106.

of a certainty. His Majesty's Ambassador in Paris has been instructed to take immediate steps to correct any such impression if he finds that this interpretation has gained currency in the minds of the French Government.

It would be most undesirable if the Czechoslovak Government and Dr. Benes in particular should build too much upon this statement, and should think that they can on the strength of it safely seek some less radical solution of the German minority problem than the present political and military situation in Central Europe requires.

You should take an early opportunity to correct any misapprehension which the Czechoslovak Government may have on this score.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 140

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 13)*

*No. 107 [C 2984/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 12, 1938

My Lord,

In Mr. Eden's despatch No. 71 of the 12th March, 1937, which reached me shortly after my arrival in Prague, I was informed of the attitude that His Majesty's Government had then decided to adopt towards, firstly, Czechoslovak relations with Germany, and, secondly, the Sudeten German question. With regard to the former, their conclusion may be shortly summarised by saying that they were not prepared to offer any advice, and still less to attempt any sort of mediation. With regard to the latter, I was instructed to continue to urge upon the Czechoslovak Government the importance of a far-reaching settlement, but for its own sake, and not because it might facilitate an agreement with Germany.

2. In the light of subsequent developments, the position has somewhat altered. Mr. Chamberlain stated in the House of Commons on the 24th March that, 'so far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, it seems to His Majesty's Government that now is the time when all the resources of diplomacy should be enlisted in the cause of peace,' and that, 'for their part, His Majesty's Government will at all times be ready to render any help in their power, by whatever means might seem most appropriate, towards the solution of questions likely to cause difficulty between the German and Czechoslovak Governments.'

3. With regard to the minority problem, I was instructed in your telegram No. 42<sup>1</sup> of the 23rd March to inform the Czechoslovak Government that His Majesty's Government would be glad at a later date to exchange views with them on the subject; and in your telegram No. 48<sup>2</sup> of the 2nd April I was instructed to use, if opportunity offered, the advice given by Sir Samuel Hoare to the Czechoslovak Minister in London that President Benes should ask the British and French Governments to give him their good offices in helping to make a really satisfactory arrangement for the German minority.

<sup>1</sup> No. 110.

<sup>2</sup> No. 123.

As a result, as reported in my telegrams No. 59<sup>3</sup> of the 2nd April and No. 63<sup>4</sup> of the 5th April, the Czechoslovak Government are now working on a plan which they propose to communicate shortly to His Majesty's Government and the French Government for their examination.

4. While I would not wish to underrate the importance of obtaining a settlement of the minority problem, which is now occupying the forefront of the stage, it may be opportune at this junction to reiterate the view I have expressed on previous occasions that the minority issue is not the whole problem of German-Czechoslovak relations. There are, in fact, grounds for believing, as every Czech believes, that for the Reich the German minority is a useful instrument for bringing pressure to bear upon the Czechoslovak Government for the benefit of the Reich. If this is so, a settlement of the minority problem, should it be achieved, would not in itself and directly settle the German-Czech problem, though indirectly a settlement might, of course, follow if the Henlein party, either as a condition for supporting the Government or after having entered it, were able to influence Czechoslovak policy in a German direction.

5. Broadly speaking, it may be said that Czechoslovakia is faced with the choice between three different positions in the scheme of European politics:—

- (a) The present position, where she is a nominally independent Power, but is actually buttressed by France and in some sense by Great Britain;
- (b) A neutralised position; or
- (c) A position within the German orbit.

6. In my telegram No. 17, Saving,<sup>5</sup> of the 15th March I ventured to suggest that the present position, which is regarded by Germany as directed against herself, was not permanently tenable. If His Majesty's Government share that view, the question for consideration is what means would be best adapted to move Czechoslovakia towards the second position mentioned above and hold her there without allowing her to fall entirely within the German orbit. I am inclined to doubt whether concentration on the minority problem is enough, for I do not believe it goes to the root of the matter.

7. Moreover, if the external problem is left to solve itself, it is difficult to see how anything short of a world war will prevent Czechoslovakia from falling, whether quickly or slowly, roughly or smoothly, into the third position mentioned above, namely, into the German orbit. There seems, on the other hand, at any rate, a possibility that, if a suggestion were now propounded to the German Government that Czechoslovakia's external position should be readjusted on the basis of neutrality, they might be prepared to accept it, more particularly as it is generally agreed, and is confirmed in Sir Nevile Henderson's despatch No. 324<sup>6</sup> of the 1st April, that Herr Hitler is not at present prepared for a major European war. Offered to-day, the proposal would represent a real concession on the part of Czechoslovakia and the democratic Powers, whereas in a year's time the same proposition might equally have the appearance of a concession on the part of Germany, for

<sup>3</sup> No. 122.

<sup>4</sup> No. 127.

<sup>5</sup> No. 86.

<sup>6</sup> No. 121.

which a price would have to be paid. To-day, such an offer might strengthen the forces of moderation in Germany; to-morrow, it might well be received with scorn.

8. While this despatch was being drafted I received and read with particular interest a copy of Sir Nevile Henderson's despatch No. 324 of the 1st April. I note and agree with his opinion that the abandonment of Czechoslovakia's alliance with Russia is likely to be one of the necessary conditions of a definite and peaceful solution, unless, indeed, Germany itself one day makes friends with Russia, when an altogether new situation would arise. I would myself go even further and express my doubts whether a permanent solution can be expected unless Czechoslovakia is, if not to give up her existing alliance with France, at least to change its character.

9. I should perhaps try to explain more closely what I have in mind when I speak of a neutralised position for Czechoslovakia. The ideally best solution on that basis might be a position comparable with that of Switzerland, whereby Czechoslovakia would become a kind of sanctuary or reserved area immunised against aggression and equally pledged to refrain from any aggression against her neighbours. In view of her different historical development and geographical situation, that may be out of the question. The next best solution would seem to be a position comparable with that of Belgium to-day, whereby from certain continental States she might receive guarantees against aggression, but would give none in return. The third best would be comparable with that of Poland, and if I have on occasion alluded rather to this example, it is only because it would have the practical advantage of being compatible with the retention of the existing French alliance.

10. The position of France in these suggested arrangements must, as I entirely appreciate, receive the fullest and most sympathetic consideration. I am fully aware both of the paramount importance of our retaining her confidence and goodwill, as well as of the reluctance she would naturally feel finally to relinquish a position in Central Europe which she built up in the early post-war years and has persistently endeavoured without overmuch success to maintain ever since. But is it in France's own best interests to endeavour to hold so exposed and burdensome a position? M. Flandin, at any rate, thinks not, as Sir Eric Phipps reported in his telegram No. 211, Saving,<sup>7</sup> of the 27th March. Were we to achieve a solution such as I have outlined above, we should thereby help France to relieve herself of a responsibility which must be becoming ever more of a dead weight on her shoulders. Owing largely to her perennial internal distractions, France's prestige in this country has fallen, and there is no confidence that she would, in fact, be prepared to march on Czechoslovakia's behalf unless assured of immediate British support. His Majesty's Government are therefore to-day probably in a position to make their own views prevail in an issue which may be none other than that of peace or war unless Germany is satisfied that she can attain her ends by economic force alone.

<sup>7</sup> Not printed. See No. 134, note 4.



11. Much is heard to-day once more of the 'Drang nach Osten,' and if a solution were to be reached on the basis of a neutralised Czechoslovakia, there would doubtless be many critics who would declare that His Majesty's Government had not merely sacrificed the only remaining democratic Power in Central Europe, but had gratuitously relinquished one of their best supports in resisting German expansion which would not stop till it had reached the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and beyond. I appreciate the force of the argument and, indeed, believe that Germany's ambitions will only be limited by her own power to achieve them. The day may therefore come when we shall have to resist perhaps by force of arms ambitions incompatible with our own vital interests. I foresee, too, that a neutralisation of Czechoslovakia might well be a blow to the prestige of the democratic Powers and a corresponding access of prestige to Germany. At the same time, I submit that Great Britain is powerful enough to face a certain loss of prestige, that she would lose more prestige if she had later to abandon to force what could perhaps now be gained by agreement, and that she is the champion of peaceful evolution. If the 'Drang nach Osten' has to be resisted, a glance at the map suggests that the least favourable place to make that resistance is in Czechoslovakia, which is at Germany's very doors, surrounded by potential enemies, completely inaccessible to any force that Great Britain could possibly put into the field, and exposed, in any case, to economic strangulation.

12. Nevertheless, we must not close our eyes to the risks attending any process of adjustment; there can be no guarantee that it would not turn into a landslide, with the same result as would, but more certainly as it seems to me, follow a policy of inaction. There are obviously many extremists, both in Germany itself and among the Sudeten German population—not to mention Poland and Hungary—whose aim it is that this country should be parcelled out among her grasping neighbours. To such people any concession on the Czech side would merely be regarded as a step towards the desired end. Even so apparently innocent a demand as that for cultural autonomy for the Sudeten Germans could, for example, be used, if granted, for the wholesale introduction of 'Mein Kampf' as well as of a swarm of National Socialist propagandists to inflame and organise the Sudeten German population. It is partly on account of this fear that any genuine concession is merely the thin end of the wedge which, apart from a temperamental obstinacy, renders the Czechs so determinedly uncompromising. We, too, must bear these dangers well in mind, but, if the art of statesmanship is that of choosing the least bad of two bad policies, the least bad in the present case seems to me, from the viewpoint of this post, to be an endeavour to change by peaceful means, and if possible within the realm of the present Czechoslovak State, a position which is fraught with so much danger and becoming more untenable every day.

13. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin and to His Majesty's Minister at Budapest.

I have, &c.

B. C. NEWTON

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 19)*

*No. 365 [C 3132/2310/18]*

BERLIN, April 12, 1938

My Lord,

As reported in my telegram No. 156<sup>1</sup> of the 11th April, the plebiscite held on the 10th April in Austria and Germany resulted in each case in over 99 per cent. of the total votes being cast in favour of the reunion of the two countries. Moreover, the proportion in Austria was actually slightly higher than in Germany proper. Even the Chancellor, speaking by wireless to Vienna, confessed that the results exceeded all his expectations.

2. There must have been many people besides the Chancellor who were surprised by the completeness of his victory in Austria. It seems scarcely credible, even when allowing for the disfranchisement of several hundred thousand Jews, that such an exiguous handful of Herr von Schuschnigg's supporters should have remained true to their principles. Even assuming, however, that a large number were moved by considerations of fear and by that resignation to the inevitable which is perhaps typically Austrian, it seems clear that the reunion is, in fact, supported by a very large majority of Austrians. No doubt National Socialism is repulsive to many, but the attractive force of Germanism is considerably stronger than affection for any political theory, and it is reasonable to suppose that the Socialists of Vienna in particular have resolved to make the best of the new situation on the principle that it is unlikely to be worse than Dr. Schuschnigg's régime, and may well be better. Certainly, though I have no desire to trespass upon what is still the ground of His Majesty's representative at Vienna, the impression made by the working classes in that city upon a casual visitor did certainly not compare on the material side with that of a modern German city. The German workman has, of course, much to complain of, and there are good reasons for thinking that large sections are discontented, but there are less good reasons for imagining that any considerable proportion would wish to change the present régime again for that of the 'System Zeit.'<sup>3</sup> In the modern industrial world economic security is the first consideration, just as it is with the most primitive tribes, and Herr Hitler has given every man a job. His wages are not high, but they enable him to live, and to live, if the reports of Sir J. Orr and the other medical experts which I read recently in your despatch No. 465<sup>2</sup> of the 31st March are to be relied upon, at least as well as the lower strata in the British labouring hierarchy, and better than the lowest.

3. The election campaign was conducted with all the virtuosity which Dr. Goebbels has acquired in his now considerable experience of such affairs. Its main feature was, of course, the Chancellor's tremendous tour of the country, starting at Königsberg and continuing via Leipzig, Berlin, Hamburg,

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. 'the system period', a National Socialist term of abuse for the Weimar Republic.

Cologne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Munich, Graz, Klagenfurt, Innsbruck, Salzburg and Linz to Vienna, with a speech at each place on fourteen successive nights. I am proposing to examine these speeches, the contents of which were very similar, in a separate despatch, and I would only remark here upon the impressive feat of endurance which this tour represented, for not one of the speeches occupied less than an hour. Wherever the Chancellor went he was received by enormous crowds assembled with all the organising skill of the party managers and great enthusiasm was shown. Once he had departed, however, from any particular place the election seems to have pursued a rather humdrum course except where it was enlivened by speeches of the other party leaders, in particular, Field-Marshal Göring and Dr. Goebbels. Both these two spoke in Berlin, but in the interval very little excitement was noticeable. Everything was done to keep the election before the public. Posters with enormous 'Ja's were plastered everywhere, and patrols of National Socialist Motor Corps held up motorists and insisted that everyone should carry a similar little placard pasted to his windscreen. Nor were more practical methods of enlisting the country's support omitted. While butter and eggs have been extremely short this winter, it was remarked that throughout the election campaign both were obtainable in any quantities and at all shops without production of the usual card. Finally, Saturday, the 9th April, was proclaimed the 'Day of Great Germany.' All work stopped at 12 o'clock, when two minutes' silence on the British Armistice Day model was announced by screaming sirens all over the country. Simultaneously units of the air force in close formation flew round and round all the principal cities. In Berlin some seven flights of bombers, mostly obsolete, roared over the chimneys at less than 200 feet and caused immense enthusiasm on the part of the populace. In the evening in Berlin there was a torchlight procession and a vast mass meeting in the Lustgarten, where a 40-foot portrait of the Chancellor was illuminated by floodlights. The latter's speech from Vienna was simultaneously broadcast through loud-speakers all over the city. It was remarked, however, that despite all these attractions there was very little spontaneous excitement towards the end of the campaign. Audiences in the cinema-theatres, who were obliged to listen to the Vienna speech before witnessing the programme, did so in silence, and those who assembled in sparse groups under the loud-speakers confined themselves to the mildest demonstrations, as well they might on a particularly bitter night.

4. From the Reich German point of view, the election was indeed not only a foregone conclusion, but a foregone conclusion which various precursors had rendered less exhilarating than was once the case. Moreover, the real enthusiasm had already showed itself on Herr Hitler's return from Vienna on the 16th March after his dramatic stroke. Then, indeed, the streets were black and crowds stood for hours outside His Majesty's Embassy, where they had no hope of seeing anything but the dispersal of the procession, but since then the first rush of enthusiasm has had time to cool, and, with Austria the scene of the electoral finale, there could not but be a slight atmosphere of anti-climax. This is not to say, however, that the popular feeling with regard

to the 'Anschluss' is any different from what it has been from the beginning, namely, one of intense satisfaction and pride. The excitement has cooled, but it has left the nation definitely more sure of itself and more convinced than ever of the infallibility of its Leader. As the question was put to Germans there could not, in the circumstances, be any answer but 'yes' for any honest citizen of the country. Some Germans regard the reunion as the removal of an age-old injustice, and some as another sign of National Socialist invincibility, while some, no doubt, feel that it was a smart stroke at the expense of the outside world, but all are undoubtedly approving, and I very much question whether any kind of sharp practice with the ballot boxes was necessary in Germany proper in order to achieve the published results.

5. With the publication of these results the Austrian question must be considered as settled, at any rate for the time being, and the country will now have to address itself to the task of absorbing the Austrian economy. The public's appetite for large-scale sensation has undoubtedly been gorged and it is reasonable to expect a rather quieter time through the coming months. It is, however, freely suggested that the newly elected Reichstag, for the vote cast on Sunday served that purpose as well, will meet and in that case the Chancellor will no doubt make a declaration to it. Such a declaration seems likely under present circumstances to be confined to a registration of the fact of Greater Germany, and we may perhaps then hope for at any rate a short breathing space before the next surprise. There must be many Germans who will also be glad of a pause.

I have, &c.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

### No. 142

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)*

*No. 259 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3009/1941/18]*

PARIS, April 13, 1938

Your despatch No. 727<sup>1</sup> of April 11, respecting the Sudeten German question.

I could not act on the above until today as the Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>2</sup> was busy all day yesterday and for a great part of the night in the Chamber. This afternoon, however, he paid me his first official visit.

I took this opportunity of speaking to M. Georges Bonnet in accordance with your instructions and strongly urged that the French Government should at once send the necessary authorisation to their Minister at Prague to concert with Mr. Newton in making the desired communication to the Czechoslovak Government.

M. Bonnet is disposed to agree to this course of action, but, having only just taken over his new duties at the Quai d'Orsay, he begs for a short time

<sup>1</sup> No. 135.

<sup>2</sup> M. Bonnet became Minister for Foreign Affairs in the new French Government formed by M. Daladier on April 10.

to reflect upon the matter. He promises, therefore, to give me a reply tomorrow, when I return his call.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, in order that he should the better understand the position, I read to him Your Lordship's telegrams Nos. 52 and 53<sup>4</sup> of April 12 to Prague.

Copy sent to Prague.

<sup>3</sup> On April 21 Sir E. Phipps was asked whether a more definite reply could be received before the visit of the French Ministers.

<sup>4</sup> Nos. 138 and 139.

### No. 143

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 77 Telegraphic [C 3030/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 13, 1938

Your telegram No. 49.<sup>1</sup>

In order to exclude any possibility of dissimulation,<sup>2</sup> I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day and read to him my report of his remarks at our last interview from words: 'he anticipated' in my telegram No. 63<sup>3</sup> to the end. Minister for Foreign Affairs said that this reproduced what he had said almost word for word. I then translated to him your telegram excluding only the first sentence and reference to a special investigator.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that proposals of Czechoslovak Government had been telegraphed to London and Paris for communication to His Majesty's Government and French Government. He promised me a translation so soon as one was ready. They had not yet been discussed with Henlein party and I gathered would in any case require further elaboration in detail. There were still, Minister for Foreign Affairs explained, certain delicate points to settle. When I showed concern at this remark he sought to reassure me by saying that difficulties were mainly departmental and were not likely to cause undue trouble. As regards procedure his idea was that if there were e.g. twenty points it might be hoped that some fifteen could be settled by discussion with Henlein party out of hand. It would then only be a matter of consulting His Majesty's Government in regard to outstanding five points. [? He] appreciated that in order to enable us to reach any helpful judgment we should require to be apprised also of conflicting views held by Henlein party.

As regards eventual support in Berlin Minister for Foreign Affairs explained that he had only had in mind that as opportunity offered the British and French Governments should express their opinion to the Reich Government that Czechoslovak Government were serious in their endeavours.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 133.

<sup>3</sup> No. 127.

<sup>2</sup> The text here should probably read 'misunderstanding'.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)*  
*No. 78 Telegraphic [C 3033/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 13, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I expressed relief that the day of the plebiscite had passed so peacefully in Sudeten areas and remarked that the slight improvement in the atmosphere ought to be used to the full in search for a settlement. My impression was that negotiations with Henlein Party were hanging fire and yet the time was running short. The Minister for Foreign Affairs doubted whether the situation was quite as serious as we are far too inclined to believe. The Czechoslovak Government would however in any case do all they could to reach a settlement if one was attainable. In confidence he observed that the Czechoslovak Prime Minister having a quick and ingenious brain was inclined to promise more than might be subsequently found to be practicable with resulting disappointment.

When I made some allusion to demand for reparation of which the Prime Minister had informed me (see my telegram No. 73)<sup>2</sup> the Minister for Foreign Affairs went up into the air and said that such a demand was impossible and that rather than comply with it his countrymen would prefer to be annexed by Germany. I tried to calm him down by pointing out that the Prime Minister had taken it far less tragically and given me the impression that if it was seriously meant it could be reduced to something more or less reasonable. Fortunately the Minister for Foreign Affairs as he himself always emphasizes is in the Cabinet as an expert and is only indirectly concerned with the internal matters. When leaving I reiterated my opinion that Sudeten German question was extremely serious and that the time for reaching a solution was running out. I said that I would be glad if I could discuss it also with the President in the early future and he promised to convey my desire to M. Benes.

I made this request in view of your telegrams Nos. 52 and 53.<sup>3</sup>

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 143.

<sup>2</sup> No. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 138 and 139.

No. 145

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 54 Telegraphic [C 2674/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 14, 1938

Your telegram No. 56 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I agree that it is undesirable in present circumstances to adopt Dr. Masaryk's suggestion reported in the first paragraph of your telegram under reference. It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to make any

<sup>1</sup> No. 124.

communication to the German Government about the Sudeten German question at the present stage.

In particular it would be most undesirable that anything should be said in Berlin to encourage the German Government to exercise pressure on Czechoslovakia (see last paragraph of your telegram under reference). The German Government are already in an inflamed and overweening mood (see Dr. Goebbels's recent speeches) and we must be careful that nothing we say or do will encourage them to vent it on Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

**No. 146**

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 126 Telegraphic [C 2674/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1938*

My telegram to Prague No. 54.<sup>1</sup>

I am sending to you for your information copies of recent despatches and telegrams in which I have instructed His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris and His Majesty's Minister at Prague to approach the Governments to which they are accredited in regard to the Sudeten German question. It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government that any communication should be made to the German Government on this subject at the present stage. It is therefore desirable as indeed you suggest in your telegram No. 152<sup>2</sup> that you should, pending further instructions, refrain from discussing this question in any detail with German Ministers. And you will no doubt feel the wisdom of prudent reserve on the matter even in private conversation with individuals.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 145.

<sup>2</sup> No. 125.

**No. 147**

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)*

*No. 116 Telegraphic [C 3052/1941/18]*

PARIS, *April 14, 1938*

Your despatch No. 727<sup>1</sup> April 11 and my telegram No. 259<sup>2</sup> Saving of April 13.

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me that he has received a telegram to-day from French Minister at Prague stating that M. Benes has announced his intention of submitting to the British and French Ministers a plan for settling Sudeten German question.

M. Bonnet assures me that in case British Minister does not think this plan sufficiently far-reaching he will instruct French Minister to join with Mr.

<sup>1</sup> No. 135.

<sup>2</sup> No. 142.

Newton in urging modifications thereof upon Czechoslovak Government. His Excellency quite agrees that it is essential not to give the Germans any pretext for aggression.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 148

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)*

*No. 196 [N 1993/725/38]*

MOSCOW, April 19, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a despatch of particular interest from the military attaché to this Embassy, in which he gives his estimate of the Red army as a fighting force and, in particular, discusses its preparedness for war at the present time. It will be seen that Colonel Firebrace gives it as his opinion that the purge, which has accounted for no less than 65 per cent. of the higher ranks, cannot but have had a disastrous effect on the morale and also on the efficiency of the Red army. He points out, moreover, that, apart from this, the disorganisation prevailing in every branch of Soviet production, distribution and transport would be bound to prove highly detrimental in time of war. The conclusion which he reaches is that in these circumstances the Red army, though no doubt equal to a defensive war within the frontiers of the Soviet Union, is not capable of carrying the war into the enemy's territory with any hope of ultimate success or without thereby running the risk of endangering the régime, and that it would therefore be contrary to reason for the rulers of this country to involve the Soviet Union in war unless vital national interests were involved.

2. I consider that, apart from the military considerations enumerated by Colonel Firebrace, the state of this country internally must needs constitute a grave deterrent from going to war. I have in previous despatches expressed the view that, although the reign of terror prevailing here would in any other country have long ago produced a violent reaction, there is, so long as circumstances remain unchanged, little danger of any upheaval taking place in the Soviet Union. There would, however, no longer be the same reasons for doubting the possibility of a revolution, if this country were to become involved in a war. In the first place, the absolute isolation from all outside influences and contacts, which is one of the essential conditions of so artificial a régime, would inevitably be broken down to a certain extent. Moreover, it seems unlikely that the Soviet economic system, already so disorganised in peace time, would be able to stand up to the strain imposed by a war. A universal lack of all the necessities of life would ensue, together with a complete breakdown of all supplies and communications. This would probably be accompanied by mass executions on an even larger scale than in time of peace. Such a state of affairs, combined with all the other hardships necessarily involved by a state of war and with the moral effect of possible military

defeats, could not, in my opinion, fail to produce a collapse which might well overturn the régime. Foreign wars have invariably produced a disquieting internal effect in this country, and there is no reason why the present régime should prove an exception to the rule.

3. Colonel Firebrace has said, and I entirely agree with him, that the Soviet Government would only be ready to run the risk of a war if they considered the vital interests of the country to be at stake. It remains to consider what interests can justly be termed vital. It seems probable that, in all the circumstances and having regard to the effects which a war would be likely to have on the stability of the régime, nothing short of an immediate threat to the integrity of Soviet territory would be held by the rulers of this country to justify entry into a war. I personally consider it highly unlikely that the Soviet Government would declare war merely in order to fulfil their treaty obligations or even to forestall a blow to Soviet prestige or an indirect threat to Soviet security, such, for example, as the occupation by Germany of a part of Czechoslovakia. In my opinion the risk entailed from an internal point of view by going to war would in Soviet councils by far outweigh the purely potential menace constituted by any change in the European balance of power.

4. This intense anxiety to avoid war has for some time past been clearly reflected in every move of Soviet policy. It would, however, be misjudging the true nature of this tendency to regard the Soviet Union as being therefore necessarily a great force on the side of world peace. On the contrary, the Soviet Union must rather, for the time being, be counted out of European politics in so far as the exercise of a decisive influence one way or the other is concerned, though there is no reason why, with time and in changed circumstances, it should not play an extremely important rôle in world affairs.

I have, &c.,  
CHILSTON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 148

*Colonel Firebrace to Viscount Chilston*

*No. 7.*

MOSCOW, April 18, 1938

My Lord,

On the completion of my first year's service as military attaché to this Embassy it may be of interest to attempt the difficult task of summing up the value of the Red army for war and its capacity for waging it in the near future. This task is not easy, as I have been accorded very few facilities by the Soviet High Command for making a detailed study of the army. For the last six months I have not been allowed to see any units, and it is clear that it is at present the policy to refuse visits to all military attachés. Even my French colleague is included in this ban.

2. A year ago the Red Army was a very large force with a peace strength of about 1,300,000, in general well equipped and particularly strong in tanks

and aeroplanes. The Russian soldier, as he always has been, was tough and brave, and better educated and better cared for than his pre-war comrades. The principal weaknesses lay in the relatively low value of the officers, whose general education was in many cases too weak to master the complicated tasks of the modern officer; in the fact that the tactics seen on the occasions when I was able to attend exercises were ineffective and such as would cause heavy casualties in war; and, lastly, in the suspected weakness of the organisation for mobilisation, concentration and maintenance of the forces in the field. I must also confess to a feeling that the general inefficiency which is so conspicuous a feature of the Soviet Union in general must also have its effect on the working of the Red Army, though it is usually assumed that in general the army machine is more efficient than the civil.

3. The events of the past twelve months have had their effects on the Red Army, and it can be stated with confidence that the Red Army to-day is less prepared for war than it was in April 1937. The principal causes of the decline are the gigantic purge, which has smitten all ranks, and the introduction of the system of military councils and military commissars. Modern warfare not being confined to the army alone, the general disorganisation in civil life caused by the civilian purge will also inevitably be reflected in the army and be detrimental to its war efficiency.

4. The purge started in June 1937 with the arrest and execution of Marshal Tukhachevski and other senior officers on general charges of treachery and conspiracy. This was the signal for a wholesale purge, in which possibly the higher ranks were more affected than the junior, though it was not confined to them. The publication in the press of lists of those who have been awarded the Jubilee Medal for twenty years' service has enabled me to calculate the approximate percentage of officers of various ranks who have been liquidated. I have also obtained figures from some of my colleagues and have arrived at the conclusion that a minimum of 65 per cent. of all officers of the rank of divisional commander and above have been lost to the army. The percentage of military commissars who have gone is even higher, there being less than 20 per cent. remaining. The commanders of the military districts have been changed in every case except one, Marshal Blyukher in the Far East being the exception. In many districts the command has changed several times during the past year owing to the liquidation of the commander, Central Asia leading the list with the proud record of five commanders in twelve months. Nearly all the more efficient higher commanders have disappeared, including all who had the benefit of higher training in Germany. The places of the liquidated officers have usually been taken by men of inferior merit, in many cases promoted for party faithfulness more than for military efficiency, and in others by the rapid advancement of quite junior officers, captains having been advanced directly to the rank of divisional commander. It may therefore well be doubted whether there are now available men who are capable of commanding armies in the event of war. Only in the Far East does Marshal Blyukher remain, and it is generally understood that his army has suffered somewhat less from the purge.



5. The institution of military councils and military commissars was done with the purpose of making the army a party army, faithful to the party leader, or at any rate capable of having its fidelity watched. There are two tendencies in the formation of a modern army, of which one is to keep the army above politics and the other to create a party army filled with the party spirit to the exclusion of all else. Marshal Tukhachevski had to some extent loosened the grip of the party on the army and for this he fell. The decision was given that the army was to be a party army, and that strict party control was to be re-established. Control over the High Command is now ensured by the military councils, which consist of three to four members, of which at least two are for the purpose of party control.

6. The functions of the military commissars, who share the command of all units, have been described in detail in a previous despatch. They are in theory equally responsible with the commanding officer for every detail of the life of the military unit. It is, however, becoming apparent in practice that they are considered the superiors of the commanding officer, and that this latter has almost been reduced to the rôle of a technical military assistant to the commissar. No one who has studied the military press of the last few months can come to any other conclusion, as articles have appeared frequently on such vital points of military life as discipline, administration and even training, in which the commanding officer has not even been mentioned and all responsibility for good or ill laid on the shoulders of the commissar. A campaign is in progress against the type of commissar who has considered himself the political assistant of the commanding officer, and these are being woken up to a sense of their new responsibilities. It is evident that the new chief of the Political Directorate of the Army, the former editor of the 'Pravda'—Mekhlis, is now to a large extent in the real command of the Red Army. All important appointments are made direct by the Central Committee of the Communist party and 'confirmed' by Marshal Voroshilov.

7. The authority of commanding officers has naturally been lowered as the authority of the commissars has been raised, and it is not surprising that the military press has had to pay serious attention to the question of discipline, which is apparently unsatisfactory. Discipline in the Red Army has always been reported as excellent, and it is a serious sign if it has been found necessary to comment unfavourably on it. I consider that the practice of self-criticism, which in reality is only criticism of superiors, must be held responsible for this, a fact which has not been appreciated by the Higher Command, as they have recently directed an increase of this objectionable practice.

8. It may be of interest to record the opinion of some of the military attachés here on the question of the capability of the Soviet Union to wage war in the near future. In general their opinions are to some extent swayed by their desires. The French military attaché, who has been recently appointed and whose judgment does not inspire confidence, professes to be convinced that the Red Army would fight if Czechoslovakia were attacked by Germany. He says that he has certain information which supports this view. He weakens his case, however, by constantly striving to minimise the

effect on the army of recent events. The Czechoslovak military attaché, who is very well informed, makes no attempt to minimise the serious weakening effect of the purge. He is 'anxiously awaiting the moment when he can telegraph to his Ministry that the purge is over.' He, however, expresses the opinion that the Soviet Union will fulfil their obligations under the pact. German and Polish opinion is unanimous that the Soviet Union would not fight in any circumstances; but here the wish may be father to the thought. The Estonian military attaché and the Latvian Minister, formerly himself a military attaché, who may possibly be considered more neutral, both consider that it is unlikely that any circumstances other than a direct attack would force the Soviet Union to fight this year. The Latvian Minister is slightly more optimistic than the Estonian military attaché about the prospects of an early recovery of the fighting efficiency of the Red Army. In general, therefore, foreign military opinion recognises that the Soviet army has suffered a severe blow and cannot be considered to be in a condition to undertake an offensive war. It is not, however, certain that the Soviet leaders themselves recognise this, or that Marshal Voroshilov would have the courage, even if he has the ability, to give this advice to Stalin. Logically, the advice of the Army Command should be that this year would be the worst possible for a campaign; but it is by no means certain that logic rules in this country. A further point which would have to be considered would be the wisdom of a general mobilisation at a time when the country is disturbed, disorganised and discontented. If these factors are really serious there might be a danger to the régime in mobilisation.

9. The strength of the Red Army lies in the number of its divisions, which probably may now be reckoned as nearly 100 infantry and 33 cavalry divisions, and in its thousands of tanks and aeroplanes, which would give it an undoubted numerical and mechanical superiority over any of the border countries who would stand the first shock of the Russian advance. Its weakness lies in its inexperienced High Command and generally in its officer corps, which has been seriously depleted by the purge; in the lessening of the authority and the initiative of its commanders owing to the reintroduction of the military councils and commissars; in its transport services and in the present general disorganisation of industry.

10. From the military point of view there must be considerable doubt as to whether the Soviet Union is capable of fulfilling its obligations under the pact with Czechoslovakia and France by undertaking a war of offence. In defence of its territory, I still consider that the Red Army would be a formidable opponent. Military advice to the Government undoubtedly should be that the present moment is most unfavourable for the use in war of the army, and that this should only be undertaken if the vital interests of the country are threatened. It may well be doubted whether the occupation of the territory of the Sudeten Germans does in effect constitute such a threat.

I have, &c.

R. C. W. G. FIREBRACE, *Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché*

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)**No. 116 [C 3300/2475/12]*

PRAGUE, April 19, 1938

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 87<sup>1</sup> of the 31st March, I have the honour to report that on the 12th April the Deputies, Senators and provincial representatives of the Slovak People's party held a meeting at Ruzomberok which, after a speech by Father Hlinka, adopted a resolution protesting against the postponement of municipal elections, the prohibition of public meetings, the censorship of the press and the manner in which pressure was being placed upon municipal councils to express their devotion to and confidence in the Government. On the 14th April the 'Slovak' published a proclamation by Father Hlinka to the Slovak nation, of which a copy<sup>2</sup> is enclosed herein, in which he threatened to sever all parliamentary co-operation with his opponents unless Slovak autonomy was granted.

2. There is no doubt that the attitude manifested by the Slovak People's party in these last few weeks has been embarrassing to the Czechs—not perhaps so much for its own sake, for they have had long experience now of this politically irresponsible people, as for the impression it has caused abroad that not only have the Czechs failed to reconcile their minority populations, but that even the Slovaks have made common cause with the latter against Czech rule, and do not even hesitate to enlist foreign aid to serve their purposes. This country's enemies have naturally not been slow to take advantage of the situation, and the Czechs find it difficult to produce a convincing reply. They may point to the manifest advantages in educational facilities, public works, &c., that have accrued to Slovakia since the union took place, but the fact remains that the only political party of any importance that bears a purely Slovak title is perpetually proclaiming its discontent.

3. Czech spokesmen have accordingly been concentrating on the argument that the Slovak People's party, in fact, only represents a minority of the Slovaks, and that the majority are loyal citizens of the republic and upholders of the centralist tradition. Elaborate calculations based on the last election results are produced to prove the truth of this assertion, but it is, of course, not accepted on the other side. It is unnecessary to trouble you with the details of these arguments, more particularly as the censor refuses publication of the more extreme statements of the autonomists. The fact seems to be that ever since the awakening of Slovak national feeling two currents of opinion have made themselves felt, one in the direction of a close Czecho-Slovak union and the other in the direction of an autonomous or independent Slovakia. The two currents show no signs as yet of merging together. On the contrary, the rival protagonists can never have been more uncompromising in their mutual hostility.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

4. Speaking on the subject to a member of my staff not long ago, an official of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs said that it was difficult for anyone not intimately acquainted with the Slovaks to understand how backward and unbalanced they were. They lived in their little villages completely under the influence of a fanatical priesthood. They belonged to the 19th rather than the 20th century, and their leaders were so irresponsible and immature that it was impossible to do serious business with them. This was equally true of Father Hlinka himself, though his health was such that he seemed unlikely to survive much longer. The prospect of his early demise was, indeed, one of the reasons for the present agitation, as the rival pretendants to the succession were all playing for position. In itself the Slovak People's party was of little intrinsic importance, but it obviously had excellent propaganda value for Czechoslovakia's enemies.

I have, &c.

B. C. NEWTON

No. 150

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)*

*No. 117 [C 3315/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 19, 1938

My Lord,

I have now received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs a translation of the proposals of the Czechoslovak Government for solving the minority problem which, as reported in my telegram No. 77<sup>1</sup> of the 13th April, he promised to me in my conversation with him on that date. Though it is probable that your Lordship will already have received a copy of these proposals from the Czechoslovak Legation in London, it seems desirable for safety's sake to forward to you a copy of the document sent to me by Dr. Krofta, and I have the honour to enclose one herein.

2. No doubt in consequence of the Easter holiday, I have not yet been summoned to the audience with the President which I requested Dr. Krofta to arrange in my conversation with him on the 13th April. I expect, however, to be summoned very shortly, and, if Dr. Benes asks for my observations on the Government's proposals, I propose to reply that I have had no communication from you on the subject, and will repeat the message which I delivered to Dr. Krofta in accordance with your telegram No. 49<sup>2</sup> of the 11th April. Should he, however, press me further, I would propose, with all reserve and solely in an endeavour to be as helpful and constructive as lies in my power, to offer my purely personal and preliminary comment somewhat as follows:—

3. As a general observation, I would remark to Dr. Benes that he had on various occasions made a public announcement of the new principles by which the administration would be guided in the future and of the spirit

<sup>1</sup> No. 143.

<sup>2</sup> No. 133. The date of this telegram was April 9.

in which it would act; his critics had been wont to reply that these were fine words and nothing more. Now that it was proposed to get down to specific measures they might well take the other line, and say that these were matters of detail, that large principles were lacking, and that what really mattered was the spirit in which the proposals would be put into practice. I would venture, therefore, to suggest that, following up his Easter message and as a kind of introduction or accompaniment to thorough-going negotiations, it might be well were he to announce that a different spirit was to prevail and that there would be new developments of principle, which, of course, could obviously only be successful if they met with a due response from the other side.

4. I would continue that the smaller national elements had asked that they should be treated not as minorities, but as constituent races in a State of composite nationalities. Might not the Czechs and Slovaks openly agree, and say that they asked nothing in return except that the other nationalities, for their part, also should loyally collaborate in the support and development of a common fatherland? The Czechs and Slovaks might say that they, for their part, recognised, and appealed to the other nationalities to do the same, that they were all partners, who should work for the good of the whole, and each of whom should treat the other as he wished himself to be treated. It could perhaps even be admitted that, consciously or unconsciously, attempts might have been made in the past to fuse the different nationalities into a common whole. That had, after all, been done in the United States of America, and there, indeed, with signal success, to the benefit of all. The Czechs and Slovaks could publicly recognise, however, that such attempts in Czechoslovakia would be misplaced, and that the various nationalities concerned would only be content, and feel able to make their best contribution to the common good, if they were satisfied that there was no threat to the maintenance of racial distinctions, that these were fully safeguarded, and that each racial constituent of the United States of Bohemia and Slovakia constituted one partner in a partnership. Finally, it might be explained that, in order to put these principles into practice and go from words to deeds, the Government now asked the next largest partner to discuss the situation and to agree upon the measures which were desirable. Similar discussions could, if desired, be held with the other national partners.

5. My personal and preliminary comments, if desired, on the specific proposals would be on the following lines: I would suggest to Dr. Benes that the form in which the proposals were put to the Henlein party was of as great importance as their substance. If, therefore, it was proposed to hand the proposals as contained in the present document to the Henlein representative, the first essential would seem to be to substitute on each occasion for the expression 'minorities' the expression 'nationalities'; for if there was one thing which roused the ire of the Sudetic Germans to-day, it was the application to them of the term 'minority.'

6. I would go on to say that I understood from Dr. Hodza that the Henlein party had made three basic demands:—



- (1) Self-administration;
- (2) Proportional appointment to Government posts; and
- (3) Reparation for damages or reinstatement.

It could be well understood that the present document was not the proper place in which to discuss the last of these three points. On the other hand, the section (paragraph 5) dealing with political self-administration and the appointment to Government posts was so vaguely worded that it was difficult to understand what precisely was meant by it. It was surely in everyone's interest that this section, above all others, should be as clear as daylight.

7. If Dr. Benes proceeded to discuss the proposals in detail, I would make the following points (I will take the proposals in order and use the same paragraph numbers as those given in the document itself):—

(2) *Measures to stop Denationalisation.*

If effectively carried out, this would meet one of the important points made in the Henlein party's six Bills and elsewhere, but protection in respect of minority schools is probably not enough. Protection against alienation of land and other important forms of property is not provided for, though I admit that the problem of providing such protection without paralysing trade enterprise strikes me as difficult.

(3) *Language Question.*

This is as yet hardly ripe for comment, as it has evidently not yet been worked out in detail; I would ask, however, whether it is proposed to include commercial enterprises under this heading; for example, whether commercial houses in Prague will be enabled to show signs in any other language than Czech.

(4) *Budget.*

This is important, but it would be better if it was clearly stated that it covered public works and Government orders, as Captain Cazalet<sup>3</sup> has informed me he understands from Dr. Benes it is intended to do. It is also not clear whether the proportion is to be based on population or financial contribution.

(5) *Government Posts.*

This section is far from clear; in particular, it is not apparent what precisely is meant by 'fonctionnaires de langue allemande,' and whether this is merely another way of expressing 'personnes appartenant à des minorités,' which expression is used later in this section. I would try to discover whether I was right in believing that the section had the following meaning: (a) In central and provincial administrations the different nationalities will be employed according to their proportion (for example, 22½ per cent. of

<sup>3</sup> Captain Victor Cazalet, M.P., had been on a short visit to Czechoslovakia and had had interviews with a number of prominent personalities.

Germans in the Central Administration, 33 per cent. in the Bohemian Administration). In the local areas State appointments (posts, police, gendarmerie, railways, &c.) will be given to the various nationalities up to their proportion (for example, 90 per cent. Germans in an area where the population is 90 per cent. German) *in so far as it is compatible with the needs of the State and the majority of the population.* (b) The local areas are said already to have self-administration. Does this mean that they will shortly obtain it as a result of local elections? What, in particular, are the Government's intentions for the appointment of the third, which is directly nominated by the State? I might also ask whether the Government had considered measures of decentralisation whereby posts, police, railways, &c., would be administered by the provincial or local Governments rather than by the Central Administration.

(6) *School Autonomy.*

I would not feel competent to comment on this proposal. It is an answer to the demand for cultural autonomy, but difficulty may arise from the desire of the Henlein party to introduce German books and teachers without restriction.

(7) *Inspectors.*

I would seek to obtain confirmation of what Dr. Benes has told Captain Cazalet, that the nationality of the inspectors and the inspectorate for the German area would be German. I would also try to clarify the claim that this proposal would contribute to the formation of a new generation of officials.

With regard to the last paragraph of the document, Dr. Benes has told Captain Cazalet that, in his opinion, the German Social Democratic party still has a following of 10 to 12 per cent. Herr Henlein put the figure at only 5 to 6 per cent. in a conversation with Captain Cazalet a day or two later.

8. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.

B. C. NEWTON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 150

*Proposals of the Czechoslovak Government for solving the Minorities Problem*

Le Gouvernement a décidé d'entreprendre une action d'envergure dans le domaine des questions de minorités.

1. Le Gouvernement et les partis politiques ont examiné, en accord avec le Président de la République, tous les problèmes intéressant les minorités, et le Conseil des Ministres, au cours de la dernière réunion, a décidé de procéder à l'élaboration d'un statut de minorités réunissant en un tout logique et bien défini tous les droits existants et toutes les garanties juridiques de nos minorités. En plus, ce statut contiendra une série de nouvelles dispositions, constituant

un nouveau grand pas vers l'élargissement des droits de nos minorités et notamment des Allemands.

2. Il sera procédé à l'élaboration d'une loi tendant à empêcher la dénationalisation, loi qui résoudra également, d'une façon satisfaisante, la question de l'abus des écoles minoritaires.

3. La loi sur l'emploi des langues sera précisée, en tenant compte des nécessités pratiques. Par là sera visé l'emploi des langues dans les entreprises d'État (postes, chemins de fer, &c.), dans les administrations de district et centrales, ainsi que l'emploi des langues en vue de la rédaction des arrêtés ministériels.

4. Sera garantie aux minorités une part proportionnelle au budget de l'État.

5. La nomination des fonctionnaires et employés d'État sera effectuée de telle sorte que revienne, dans le proche avenir, aux minorités leur quote-part proportionnelle. En outre, la question de l'envoi des fonctionnaires et d'employés dans les régions allemandes et minoritaires sera réglemantée de telle façon qu'il y ait toujours dans les régions allemandes ou minoritaires un pourcentage suffisamment élevé des fonctionnaires de langue allemande ou minoritaire. Ce sera un compromis en présence de la revendication d'une 'Selbstverwaltung' pour les administrations d'État. Dans les communes, villes et districts la 'Selbstverwaltung' élue existe déjà sous tous les rapports. Dans les administrations d'État elle sera effectuée dans la mesure où elle sera compatible avec les besoins de l'État et de la majorité de sa population moyennant des nominations de personnes appartenant à des minorités respectives aux postes de fonctionnaires dans ces régions.

6. Sera réalisée la soi-disant 'Selbstverwaltung' scolaire. Il y sera procédé par l'élargissement de la compétence des conseils scolaires provinciaux à Praha, Brno et Bratislava, où des sections seront organisées selon les nationalités et placées entièrement sous la direction des fonctionnaires de la nationalité respective, en vue d'administrer toutes les écoles primaires, normales, secondaires et professionnelles. Une quote-part dans le nombre total d'écoles, de même qu'une quote-part pertinente dans l'ensemble du budget du Ministère de l'Instruction publique, seront respectivement garanties aux différents groupes ethniques. Au Ministère de l'Instruction publique il y aura également aux postes de rapporteurs des fonctionnaires appartenant à des minorités.

7. Des mesures seront prises pour faire disparaître toutes les causes de friction dans la gendarmerie, dans la police, dans l'administration fiscale et dans les services publics, aux chemins de fer et aux postes, par la création, pour un temps transitoire, des postes d'inspecteurs appelés à écarter d'une façon continue toutes les frictions en matière de langue dans l'Administration, aussi bien dans l'expédition des affaires que dans ses rapports avec les parties, ce qui d'autre part contribuera à la formation d'une nouvelle génération de fonctionnaires.

Ce ne sont pour le moment que les grandes lignes qui seront encore précisées et complétées.

Le Conseil des Ministres a décidé que le statut en question soit le plus tôt possible élaboré par les services des Ministères d'Intérieur, de la Justice et de l'Unification et que soient maintenus les contacts et poursuivies les discussions avec les partis allemands, à savoir avec le parti des Allemands des Sudètes, ainsi qu'avec les sociaux-démocrates allemands qui ne sont pas, il est vrai, représentés au Gouvernement, mais qui continuent à faire partie de la coalition gouvernementale.

No. 151

*Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)*

*No. 197 [C 3314/132/18]*

His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned document.

BRITISH EMBASSY, MOSCOW, *April 19, 1938*

ENCLOSURE IN No. 151

*Colonel Firebrace, Military Attaché, to Viscount Chilston*

*No. 6*

*MOSCOW, April 18, 1938*

My Lord,

In recent talks with the Czecho-Slovakian [*sic*] and French Military Attachés, I have discussed the question of the action of the Red Army if it is called upon to undertake offensive operations in connection with the Franco-Soviet and Czecho-Slovakian Pacts.

Both my colleagues consider that the Red Army would have to advance through Poland as this offers the only theatre of war in which it could develop its numerical and mechanical superiority. Passage through Roumania would be very difficult as the country is unfavourable for operations of large forces. In the same way attack through Latvia and Lithuania must be restrained to small forces unless Polish territory is violated.

Both Military Attachés are very mistrustful of Poland and said that she was flirting with Germany whilst having an Alliance with France. They seemed to think that Poland would probably either be definitely on the side of the Germans or neutral. I asked the Czecho-Slovakian Attaché what would happen if the neutrality of Poland barred the way to the advance of the Red Army. He said that in that case the Soviet Government would present an ultimatum to Poland and demand the right of passage for its troops. If, as he anticipated, Poland refused this, the Soviet Union would declare war on Poland.

The French Military Attaché, whilst expressing himself in different words, would seem to agree with this view. He said that it was necessary at the present moment for France to speak very strongly to Poland and force her back

to the side of France. For this purpose it was essential that M. Beck should be removed. Poland must be forced to allow Soviet troops to pass through their country. I observed that I did not think it likely that the Poles, who hated both Russians and Communism, would even consider allowing Soviet troops to operate through Poland. Colonel Pallas's only reply to this was that they must be forced to do so.

I myself agree that the only way in which Soviet Russia could directly advance in strength to the support of Czecho-Slovakia would be through Poland. Advance through Roumania, even with moderate forces, would leave Poland, obviously a possible opponent, on the flank, and would in any case be unlikely to present a serious threat to German invasion. If, as seems likely, the Soviet plans are for an attack through Poland—and the Czecho-Slovakian Military Attaché seems confident of this—Poland in my opinion must be reckoned with as an enemy as I cannot see that in any circumstances she would allow of the passage of Soviet troops through her country.

I have, &c.

R. C. W. G. FIREBRACE, *Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché.*

No. 152

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)*

*No. 381 [C 3325/132/18]*

BERLIN, *April 20, 1938*

My Lord,

I have given elsewhere an account of a conversation<sup>1</sup> which I had with Field-Marshal Göring on the 16th instant in regard to Herr von Schuschnigg and other Austrians at present under arrest.

2. At the end of my visit, when I was preparing to leave, the conversation turned to more general subjects. The field-marshal, speaking very bitterly, said that he could not understand the mentality of the British and felt sometimes mad with rage against them. They had, he said, lost all sense of fair-mindedness and were merely influenced by emotions of fear and prejudice. The only country which had justifiably a right to object to the union of Austria with Germany was Italy. Yet it was Britain which had protested, whereas Signor Mussolini and the Italians had been wise enough to accept with good grace what they could not prevent. The Germans were grateful for this and to-day, in consequence, even the people, who would far prefer to be friends with England and had never trusted the Italians, had changed their views and now thought really well of the Italians. The field-marshal seemed genuinely disappointed at our having missed what seemed to him a golden opportunity to prove for once that England did not always stand everywhere in Germany's path.

<sup>1</sup> This conversation took place at Karinhall. Sir N. Henderson had tried unsuccessfully to secure the release of Dr. Schuschnigg and other imprisoned Austrians.



3. I told Field-Marshal Göring that the Italian censorship was doubtless responsible for the absence of criticism in Italy and that, in any case, it was probably true to say that we were more disinterestedly sincere and honest in our opinions. We might misunderstand the Germans, but they certainly misunderstood us if they imagined that we would sit by and approve the forcible entry of a hundred thousand troops and police into Austria. Public opinion in England had been outraged at what had all the appearance of a rape. We might not have objected to seduction, whereas now the British public was more than ever convinced that the only policy which counted for Germany was one of brute force. Austria had stimulated recruiting in England, but had, on the other hand, given rise to much unfortunate talk as to further German aggression. Nor was it surprising that people asked where the limit was and did not believe that Germany would ever settle down peacefully as a satisfied country.

4. Field-Marshal Göring replied that he appreciated the fact that England was rearming. He never allowed any of his officers to speak disparagingly of Britain or to underrate her strength. He added that incidentally one of the surest ways to win a war was to appreciate justly the capacities of one's adversary! He hated, however, the idea of what he called the two great Germanic peoples fighting each other again. Before 1914 it was Germany who always talked of 'The Day' and regarded war with England as inevitable and so brought it on. Now it was the other way round. It was England which regarded war as inevitable and there was a real danger of its resulting once again in consequence of that very mentality. It was a curious fact that England, which had understood better than anyone else and sympathised so actively with the process of Italian unification in the last century, was blinder than anyone else to the process of German unity in this century. (This is a favourite subject of comparison just now in the German press.)

5. Germany, he continued, would finally become a territorially satisfied nation as soon as the Sudeten question was settled. He had, he said, recently seen Herr Henlein, who had not been hopeful as to the possibility of coming to an arrangement with Dr. Benes. If the latter proved unreasonable, then anything might happen, and he described the fate of the Czechs in violent terms. But, apart from the Sudeten, everything else was of minor importance: Danzig was already practically German again; the problem of the corridor could be solved possibly by a corridor across a corridor; Memel would also have to come back to Germany, but these were all matters of comparatively easy adjustment. (Please see in this connexion my despatch No. 324<sup>2</sup> of the 1st April.) Germany, he added, was not going to worry about 40,000 Germans in Eupen, and it was utter nonsense to talk about the half-million Germans in Hungary or the three-quarter million in Yugoslavia. The former had settled there of their own free will and were perfectly happy. As for Yugoslavia, Germany wanted her to be as strong as possible and regarded her as a possible future ally ('Bundnismacht'). Economically, Germany wanted,

<sup>2</sup> No. 121.

of course, her place in the world, but there was room for both England and Germany, and the latter was only too willing to come to any agreement that England liked about spheres of influence for trade. He wished, he said, that he could speak to Mr. Chamberlain himself about all this, although he supposed that he would merely talk about peace. Well, if he wanted peace and peaceful solutions, the best thing that His Majesty's Government could do would be to let Dr. Benes know that he must come to an agreement direct with Germany. Finally, as a sort of afterthought, he mentioned colonies, which he said Germany must have to be really satisfied.

6. When the field-marshal began to talk wildly about dividing the appendix (which is his favourite term for Czechoslovakia) between Poland, Hungary and Germany, I warned him that aggression there was likely to have far more serious consequences than in the case of Austria; but otherwise I did not interrupt this monologue, nor did I express any views at all myself as to a solution of the Sudeten. At the same time I could not but reflect that Field-Marshal Göring's language, intemperate though it often is and was on this occasion as regards the Czechs, reflects the ideas of the great proportion of this people as well as of the Sudeten themselves. It is the eleventh hour so far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, and if she takes the wrong turning now she may well lose everything. It is not arguments about historical or natural frontiers, or considerations about strategical or economic factors, which will count to-day but facts of nationality and geography, however unpleasant they may be to others. Unless Dr. Benes, relying on British support, is determined like Herr von Schuschnigg to risk not only the entire independence of his country but another world war as well, he will be well-advised now to make the best bargain that he can with Herr Hitler himself before the twelfth hour strikes. However distasteful it is to me to express such a categorical opinion, I would not be justified in giving any other. I believe that it is open to us to try, probably with success for a while, to impose another solution, particularly if we were to announce our determination to intervene in the event of aggression, however engineered. But, sooner or later, there is not a hope of the Sudeten remaining citizens of Czechoslovakia unless they do so willingly.

7. Nor did I make any comment to Field-Marshal Göring on the colonial question except to observe firstly that, whereas on the 3rd March His Majesty's Government was prepared to discuss that question, the events of the 12th and 13th March had caused the possibilities in that respect to recede into the background, and secondly to remark that no understanding between countries or individuals was possible without reciprocity. I quoted Herr Hitler's own words in 'Mein Kampf' in this connexion, and said that if Germany could not agree with us about Central Europe, I did not see whence reciprocity was to be found.

8. Field-Marshal Göring's reply to this was 'limitation of armaments.' Once the Sudeten question was out of the way Germany would be quite willing to discuss this. Moreover there was already the Naval Agreement. It had never been valued in England, and he himself bitterly regretted that

Herr Hitler had ever consented to it at the time without getting anything in exchange. It had been a mistake, but Germany was nevertheless not going to remain in a state of inferiority in this respect *vis-à-vis* a hostile Britain, and would build up once more to a 100 per cent. basis. Then, I said, you will certainly have war. Field-Marshal Göring argued that naval equality did not necessarily mean an unfriendly Germany. I replied that Herr Hitler was wiser than he was. We would always go to war with a country which threatened us on the sea. Germany was a continental Power and we might not be justified in seeking to restrict her land forces, but Britain was an island and her whole existence rested on air and sea power. If Germany wanted war, naval competition was the surest way to bring it about. Field-Marshal Göring appeared reluctantly to agree, and remarked that while Herr Hitler did not regard himself as bound by the treaties which the previous régime had signed he would always respect his own signature. Nevertheless, I would draw your Lordship's attention to the fact that this is the first time that a German has even hinted to me of the possibility of going back on the Naval Agreement.

9. At one moment in the course of this conversation Field-Marshal Göring asked me rather uneasily what we sought to get out of our agreement with Italy, and observed that if we hoped to weaken the Berlin-Rome axis we would not succeed in doing so. I told him that such was not the object of His Majesty's Government, though I hoped that a friendly Signor Mussolini might help even with Berlin. But the whole aim of our negotiations with Italy were, I said, to restore peace and confidence in the world in general and in the Mediterranean in particular. I had every hope that this end would be ensured by their successful conclusion. That was something, possibly a great deal. Nor, indeed, had we even begun negotiations with Italy to the exclusion of Germany. If it had not been for the internal crisis here, we would have commenced discussions with the German Government at the same time as with Rome. As it was I had seen Herr Hitler on the 3rd March, but events in Austria had intervened and put the clock back. Field-Marshal Göring retorted that Austria had simplified matters and was a step towards peace just as much as our agreement with Italy. Perhaps, I replied, but the whole difference lay in the methods employed.

I have, &c.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

### No. 153

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)*

*No. 387 [C 3328/132/18]*

BERLIN, April 21, 1938

My Lord,

In my despatch No. 365<sup>1</sup> of the 12th April I sought to give some description of the recent plebiscite in Germany and of the electioneering campaign

<sup>1</sup> No. 141.

which preceded it, and I mentioned that the central feature of the latter was the Chancellor's tour through the country. It may perhaps be of interest, now that the plebiscite itself is fading into the background, to examine the imposing series of speeches which Herr Hitler delivered during the fortnight before the vote.

2. In general, as was natural, the speeches were very similar in basic content, though they varied slightly from city to city in accordance with local conditions. The keynote of the Chancellor's various utterances was his obvious and natural satisfaction with his own handiwork. He was only reflecting the feelings of his audiences, for the whole country is undoubtedly enthusiastic over the bloodless reunion with Austria. More than once Herr Hitler himself confessed with satisfaction that he had had to take risks in reoccupying the Rhineland and so on, but he intimated clearly that in the Austrian affair he had taken no risks. Throughout his very similar accounts of his negotiations with Herr Schuschnigg he represents himself as the patient master of the situation who tried his best to reach a peaceful solution and was finally obliged by the treachery of his miserable opponent to apply the irresistible and merciful might of Germany. In fact, he 'got away with it' because Germany was strong, whereas previously, as he said, he had had to rely upon the unity of the people alone.

3. There was also in all the speeches an appreciable change in his attitude to the outside world, and particularly that part of it which is generally considered in Germany as hostile. The Chancellor showed, indeed, the same or even greater resentment, particularly against the foreign press, which is now the object of his almost unreasoning hatred. But there were no recriminations on the score of Germany's present position in the world, and his complaints were directed almost exclusively to the past, if one excepts the perennial charges of hypocrisy and incomprehension of national socialism. Where previously the hated peace treaties were invoked to spur the nation to effort and sacrifice, they were mentioned now only in the triumphant recital of the Nazi ascent to independence. They are still objects of contempt and loathing, symbols of democratic oppression, but they are treated as dead, and there is an absence of the whining tones which were once associated with Versailles. There was hardly a mention of colonies.

4. On the internal side the speeches revealed nothing novel, but they nearly all contained a reasoned argument of the inevitability of national socialism and showed how far the theory of the movement has now progressed towards crystallisation. Briefly, the German problem is presented as one of unity, and German history is traced with great plausibility to show that it has been German divisions alone which have prevented the Reich from playing a leading rôle in Europe before. Thus the Thirty Years' War bears the principal blame and is followed by Napoleon, while Bismarck is exalted as the founder of the First Reich, which for a time at least seemed to have achieved a large measure of unity. The collapse of the First Reich Herr Hitler ascribes frankly to Marx's discovery of the class war and the division of the nation once more, this time into *bourgeois* and proletariat. Hence the

necessity for fusing the two ideals, the nationalism of the former and the socialism of the latter. Hence, too, the refusal, on which he laid great stress, to join any of the former political parties which he considered hopelessly committed to one camp or the other.

5. The unity doctrine is of interest at the present moment, not only on account of the Germans who still remain outside the Reich, but also in view of the very high psychological importance which the Chancellor undoubtedly attaches to it. In his speech at Frankfurt he actually mentioned the advantages which England had secured by her early-achieved unity, and the British example is certainly before him whenever he visualises a final test of his new Third Reich in war. In all his speeches and in those of the subordinate leaders the phrase 'ein geschlossenes Volk' ('a compact and united people') continually recurs. The British are such a people, and Herr Hitler would no doubt like to think that the Austrian plebiscite has now turned the Germans into one. The British have their differences, but they are conscious of something above party, and they also manifest to German eyes a certain collective ruthlessness in moments of national danger which is held to be the hall-mark of an imperial people. The Germans, on the other hand, failed in 1918 for lack of this quality, and it is the Nazi determination to instil it or, if not, to produce it synthetically, which lies at the root of the apparently futile attacks on the churches and other harmless sectarian interests.

6. In all the speeches the unity theme naturally led on to the reunion with Austria and the Nazi version of its achievement, which is already familiar. It also led, however, to a preliminary recapitulation of the circumstances in which the prohibition of the 'Anschluss' was incorporated in the Versailles Treaty, and thus to the significant mention of the figure 10 million for the Germans excluded from the Reich after the war. This figure, coupled with that of 6½ million which Herr Hitler continually gave for the population of Austria, could not but apply to Austrians and Sudeten Germans together, and its repetition in almost every speech was the most disquieting feature of the election campaign. Though Czechoslovakia was never expressly mentioned, there is small room for doubt that Herr Hitler meant his words to sink in, nor, in that case, is he likely to abandon his determination to reunite the Sudeten with the Reich sooner or later. For him to renounce this dream would be contrary to his whole character, which seems to have become not less but more mystical as success has come to him. Moreover, anyone who has already achieved so many seemingly impossible aims without firing a shot is not likely to stop short of what every German now regards as the logical consummation of his policy.

7. Mention has just been made of the Chancellor's increasingly mystical outlook, but this should not be taken to mean any diminution in his phenomenal flair for opportunity, or in his strictly practical attention to matters of internal and external politics when occasion demands. Indeed, Dr. Dietrich, the Reich Press Chief, in a panegyric published on the Chancellor's birthday, describes at length his interest in and careful application to all questions of military detail. On the other hand, the election campaign and his own



speeches definitely show him to have risen another stage towards deification in the popular imagination. His receptions were everywhere tremendous, and he seems to have reacted by laying increasing emphasis on his personal mission and achievements. More than once he told his audience that he was not a politician and had never made a speech until he felt himself impelled to do so by the tragic state of Germany after the war. He was then wont to recount the steps by which he raised the Nazi party to power, and then Germany out of her humiliation. Throughout the recital he would point to the miracle by which a simple front-line soldier could achieve such feats and assert his faith in his mission. In conclusion, he almost invariably called down God's blessing on Greater Germany, and, indeed, he seems already to have arrogated to himself that specially favoured position with the Almighty which other monarchs in former centuries and Wilhelm II himself were wont to claim. This is in complete accord with the present feelings of the nation at large towards him. He is a prophet as well as a national leader, and the starved emotions of this very emotional country have overflowed for him. During the election in Berlin it was no uncommon sight to see outside a polling-station his portrait surrounded by a wreath of bay with a species of votary flame burning before it. Nor is this an isolated phenomenon. Speaking in Berlin on the eve of his birthday, Dr. Goebbels described the scene in the Reich Chancellery when Dr. Schuschnigg's speech from Innsbruck announcing his ill-fated plebiscite was received on the wireless. 'With long strides,' said Dr. Goebbels, 'the Führer paced the room, and on his face were painted god-like wrath and holy indignation.' Adulation can scarcely go further, but it is certainly no exaggeration to say that, since the election and the bloodless reunion with Austria, the Chancellor has rallied a very considerable further proportion of malcontents to his side. There are many complaints against the régime and the Nazi machinery weighs heavily on large sections of the population, so that many individual party leaders are by no means popular, but the Chancellor is an exception, and there is virtually no one in Germany who does not regard his action in Austria as a great and wise deed of statesmanship which merits the gratitude of the whole nation.

I have, &c.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

#### No. 154

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 23)*

*No. 82 Telegraphic [C 3371/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 22, 1938

My telegram No. 80.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of long audience M. Benes explained to me that during the last weeks he had been discussing necessity of radical solution of Sudeten German question with Czech coalition parties. He had now just secured

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that he was about to have an audience with President Benes.

their concurrence in a far-reaching programme drawn up by himself which will be formally but confidentially communicated to you by Czechoslovak Minister immediately on his return to London on April 25th or April 26th.

Government will propose to Henlein party that serious negotiations for its execution should start next week. These will be carried out simultaneously with German Social Democrats who are also part of German minority. M. Benes hopes to push negotiations through during May and then in June and July next to pass necessary legislation through Parliament where he does not in the circumstances expect to encounter any serious difficulties. He went into numerous details of measures on which I will report separately. They went further, he believed, than Sudeten Germans expected and represented a programme which he had always intended to execute, but gradually, in the course of perhaps ten years or more. He realised that in this he had made a mistake and that they must now be achieved at once.

I reminded the President of passages in communication I had made to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on March 24 to the effect that His Majesty's Government felt that every possible step should be taken to remove the causes of friction or conflict and that they would be glad later to exchange views and I said that you were closely studying the question in preparation for such an exchange. I believed myself that you were gravely impressed with the danger of the situation and the necessity for taking every possible step to alleviate the danger. Last autumn I had been instructed to inform him of the opinion of His Majesty's Government that a very special effort was then required to solve Sudeten German question. Unfortunately the effort made had not sufficed and now in my view which moreover I believed to be yours the time had come when a supreme effort must be made. The opportunity for making it might not last very long. Herr Hitler had always surprised us hitherto by acting sooner than had been expected.

M. Benes assured me that he would do everything in his power to reach a fair settlement but of course goodwill would be necessary not only from Czech side where it would certainly be present but also from Sudeten Germans and from the Reich. He for his part was determined to go to the utmost lengths possible. He believed moreover that he could reach a settlement.

In conclusion I spoke to him seriously in the sense of your telegram No. 53<sup>2</sup> observing that it would be dangerous to assume that Mr. Chamberlain's carefully chosen words meant anything more than they actually said. M. Benes replied that he realised that His Majesty's Government had retained complete freedom of decision. He particularly valued Mr. Chamberlain's speech for its restraining effect on Germany. He also made a passing allusion to reassuring consequences to be expected from Anglo-Italian Agreement. I told him that here again it would be unwise to count on such consequences whereupon he said he quite realised that Czechoslovakia must make her full contribution to the cause of peace.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 155

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 24)*  
*No. 83 Telegraphic [C 3372/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 23, 1938

I learn from a secret but entirely reliable source that a Russian General and Colonel have arrived in Prague and are having general discussions with the General Staff. It is expected that they will see Minister of Defence and be taken round the frontier fortifications.

Not repeated.

No. 156

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 24)*  
*No. 84 Telegraphic [C 3378/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 23, 1938

My telegram No. 82<sup>1</sup> and my despatch No. 117.<sup>2</sup>

The President said that the programme which would be communicated by Czechoslovak Minister in London next week would be of a binding character. The finishing touches and procedure to be adopted had been finally agreed with Prime Minister only on the previous day. M. Benes seemed at first to be unaware that I had already received from Minister for Foreign Affairs the substance if not the final form of his proposals and he did not ask me for my comment on them. In the course of our discussion I obtained nevertheless some elucidation as described in my immediately following telegram<sup>3</sup> of various points to which I drew attention in the latter part of [? my despatch].

I deprecated the use of 'minority' and said that I had particularly noticed he had used 'nationalities' in his [Easter] message to which M. Benes responded by saying he had done so deliberately. At the conclusion of this part of our conversation I thought I had better take the opportunity to offer the general observation set forth in paragraphs 3 and 4 of my despatch making it clear my reflections were purely personal. In using the expression 'United States of Bohemia and Slovakia' I explained I did not wish to raise any question of federation but only to bring out the ideals of union and partnership. M. Benes listened with attention and said that he personally agreed with my remarks. He had long held that Czechoslovakia could not be a national State but he had to educate Czech parties especially those over which he had most influence. Although Austrian 'Anschluss' had had a great effect he had to be careful in the choice of his words and by being so could obtain greater concessions of substance. In the Cabinet it was already realised that his programme meant an end of the conception of a national State. I mentioned to President that [Captain] Cazalet had informed me that

<sup>1</sup> No. 154.

<sup>2</sup> No. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

on his stating his belief that it was officially recognised that Czechoslovakia was not a national State to some Sudeten Germans, they had immediately drawn his attention to a speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs recording the view that Czechoslovakia was the national State of Czechs and Slovaks (this is presumably the lecture referred to in my Savingsgram No. 28 of March 25, 1937).

A difficulty of principle to which M. Benes alluded was claim of Henlein party for special treatment for racial groups (Volksgruppen). In a democratic State it was the rights of individuals and not of any group as such which must be respected and it would be impossible to admit totalitarian or authoritarian claims.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

### No. 157

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27)*

*No. 84 Saving: Telegraphic [C 3491/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 25, 1938

My telegram No. 89.<sup>1</sup>

Following is a summary of Herr Henlein's speech at Karlsbad on 24 April:

Herr Henlein said that he had three times held out his hand to the Czechs: in his Böhmisches-Leipa speech in 1934, after the elections in May 1935, and when he had put forward the racial protection Bills ('Volksschutzgesetzanträge'), which offered a new basis to tackle the national problem. The world could therefore judge whether it had been the Sudeten Germans or the Czechoslovak Government who had adopted the right attitude to the problem. He had by no means the intention to repeat his gestures on the present occasion, because he did not wish to expose himself to another rebuff.

He continued that, in 1918, the Germans in the Austro-Hungarian Empire had, like the Reich Germans, put their trust in President Wilson's fourteen points. They had been bitterly disappointed, for the new Europe brought the German groups and the Hungarians only injustice and force. The Sudeten Germans considered the right to self-determination inalienable; as the Peace Conference had disregarded this right, the responsible Powers at the conference shared in the responsibility for the present untenable conditions in this State. Czechoslovakia's racial juristic obligations derived from: (1) the pre-Peace Treaty, which made Wilson's fourteen points the basis of the peace; (2) the Czechoslovak peace delegation's memoranda to the Peace Conference and Dr. Benes's note of 20th May, 1919, together with the conference's observations thereon; (3) the Treaty of Saint-Germain. The right of self-determination should thereby have become more than a mere phrase, and all clearly defined national claims should have been fully satisfied.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of April 25 Mr. Newton reported his view that it would be imprudent to count on a successful outcome of the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Henlein party in view of the claims now advanced by Herr Henlein.

The Czechoslovak peace delegation, in order to deny the Sudeten Germans their right of self-determination, had, declared Herr Henlein, falsified the national statistics. In Memorandum III, Document 2, it had been asserted that the German problem was confined to Bohemia, as in Moravia the Germans were scattered and there were no compact German groups. In fact, he declared, in Moravia-Silesia the Germans were in the absolute majority in 120 districts ('Bezirke').

In Czechoslovakia there was a régime of the greatest freedom only for the Czechs, but not for the other peoples. In view of the developments of the last twenty years, it was the greatest irony to talk of an incarnation of democracy.

Not only had the Czechs not fulfilled the promises made in their memoranda, but they had not even fulfilled the obligations contained in the Treaty of Saint-Germain. The provision contained in the Constitution that no law could be in conflict with the national treaties was completely worthless, for although the constitutional court could examine the constitutionality of laws, it could only be called by the majority of the National Assembly, so that the non-Czech national groups could not in practice appeal to it. Not only were there laws which conflicted with the provision of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, but even more so did the procedure of the Czech Administration.

The dictated peace of Saint-Germain created a State of six different nationalities, in which the largest nation only consisted of about 50 per cent. of the total population. As this 50 per cent., that is, the Czechs, considered the State made for them alone and acted as if it were a purely Czech national State, the gravest tension understand[ab?]ly arose. The Sudeten Germans had made twenty-two complaints to the League of Nations; not a single one had been dealt with. They had now recognised the hopelessness of this method and no further complaints would be sent to the League. They had also attempted to persuade the Czechs to create an order so that the non-Czech nations could freely recognise the State—an attempt which was known to the world under the name of 'Activism'.

Herr Henlein continued that for years the Czechs had believed that his movement would one day disappear as quickly as it had grown. To-day he could tell the world that more than 90 per cent. of the Sudeten Germans were in his movement and ready to fight for their rights with every possible means. It could not be a matter of indifference to Europe whether the oppressed Sudeten Germans obtained their rights.

If the Czechs wanted to give up their illusions of a national State and reconstruct the State in co-operation with the other nationalities, it must be made plain that the Minority Statute was completely insufficient. The Sudeten Germans would never be content to be a 'minority', and the world would not understand that the artificially created Czech minority, which, in 1918, only constituted 5 per cent. of the German population, should claim to be the State-nation in German territory. Unless the Sudeten Germans obtained the same rights as the Czechs, they would no longer be able to recognise the same duties.



The minority problem could not be settled by half-measures such as a so-called 'Minority Statute'. The codification of the existing minority regulations would only mean the perpetuation of injustice. But the Government could without difficulty educate public opinion, for the average Czech was at heart peace-loving; but he must be freed from the influence of the chauvinistic Czech press.

The Sudeten Germans could not be expected to join in the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary of Czechoslovakia, into which they had been forced against their will and where they felt to-day less free than ever before.

He then referred to memorandum No. 1 of the Czech delegation in Paris, which stated that the general situation of Czechoslovakia necessarily rendered her a mortal foe of the Germans, and asked whether the rulers of the country were still determined to maintain that position.

If the Czech statesmen were earnestly striving for a better understanding with Germany, the following points were essential:—

- (1) A wholesale revision of the erroneous Czech myth of their own history.
- (2) A correction of the view that it was the particular task of the Czech people to form a Slav bulwark against the so-called 'Drang nach Osten'.
- (3) A revision of Czechoslovak foreign policy, which had hitherto placed the State among the enemies of the German people.

But relations between Czechoslovakia and greater Germany could not be reformed without a simultaneous settlement of Czech relations towards the Sudeten Germans.

The Czechs had for three reasons failed to fulfil the justified expectations of the peoples concerned:—

- (1) They had not kept the promises freely made in their various memoranda to the Peace Conference.
- (2) They had not kept their engagements under the Treaty of Saint-Germain.
- (3) They had not kept the engagements set out in their own Constitutional Charter.

Instead of equality of all citizens, they had set up inequality of all peoples; instead of political and civil equality, inferiority of status for all non-Czech peoples; instead of free development of all nationalities within the State, national, political and cultural oppression of all non-Czech peoples.

Instead of true democracy, there had been set up the dictatorship of the Czech majority, bureaucracy and policy; instead of a second Switzerland, a State had been created where to-day all non-Czech peoples had every right to feel unfree, deprived of their natural rights and oppressed. To-day all non-Czech peoples from Bohemia down to Carpatho-Ruthenia raised their voices in protest against a treatment which was inconsistent with every feeling of national self-consciousness, honour and dignity.

The Sudeten Germans would feel oppressed until they could live as free men among free men.

To pave the way for peaceful development in the Czechslovak State, the legal order of the State should be built on the following lines:—

- (1) Full equality of status between Czechs and Germans.
- (2) Guarantee of that equality by recognition of the Sudeten Germans as a legal personality.
- (3) Definition and recognition of the German regions within the State.
- (4) Full self-government for those regions.
- (5) Legal protection for every citizen living outside the region of his own nationality.
- (6) Removal of injustices inflicted upon the Sudeten Germans since 1918 and the reparation of the damages caused thereby.
- (7) Recognition and realisation of the principle: within the German regions German officials.
- (8) Full liberty to profess the German nationality ('Volkstum') and the German political philosophy.

In the light of recent developments, Herr Henlein continued, he could feel entitled to make still higher claims. He did not wish to raise them, and by so refraining proved once again to the whole world that Sudeten Germany was determined, despite its bitter experiences, to restrict its claims and so contribute towards European peace. It was now the turn of the Czech leaders to give the same proofs, to talk less of peace and to do more for it. It was no use to try once more to deceive uninformed foreigners and to avoid the problem by sham solutions. Similarly, it would be wrong for Czech policy to depend exclusively on France and Soviet Russia, without itself contributing to European peace.

Notwithstanding the political boundaries of the State, the Sudeten Germans, being part and parcel of the German people, could not withdraw from a political philosophy which was to-day joyfully confessed by all Germans in the world. This was a question of conviction, and freedom of conviction and conscience was guaranteed to every citizen by the Constitution. The Sudeten Germans confessed the principles of national socialism. It inspired their thoughts and their actions. They would form their lives according to it within the framework of the law. It was intolerable that persecutions should be going on, directed not against criminal acts, but against a conviction which had grown to be their common spiritual and moral property.

Terrorists on the Czech side would hate the Sudeten Germans and persecute them because of this open confession of German national socialism; true democrats, perhaps, would understand and value it, because they knew that their own nations had to thank such a great unifying idea for its [? their] spiritual and cultural renaissance 100 years ago.

Whether the present unbearable conditions would be changed during the twentieth anniversary of the State and a contribution towards European peace be thereby effected depended not upon the Sudeten Germans, but upon the goodwill and foresight of the Government. The former did not want war

—either within or without. But they could no longer allow a situation to continue which meant for them open war amid formal peace.

(Repeated to Paris, and Berlin, Saving.)

### No. 158

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27)*

*No. 95 Telegraphic [C 3507/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 26, 1938

I called on Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning and found him more depressed than resentful over Karlsbad speeches.

He realised that, in the words of a German proverb, 'nothing is eaten as hot as it is cooked', but evidently doubted whether the Czech will to a settlement was reciprocated. He had warned the German Minister yesterday that if the bow-pin [? bow-string] stretched too far it would break. He understood that in Saxony rumours were rife that Herr Hitler would soon be in Czechoslovakia. These stories were avidly accepted by the Sudeten youth, and had contributed to a feeling of such insecurity that Czech as well as Jewish inhabitants were selling their property in Sudeten area for whatever it would fetch.

The Czechoslovak Government were ready to negotiate, but he doubted whether any serious negotiations would be possible until after the local elections. I expressed the hope that the Czechoslovak Government would still, if possible, follow procedure which he had indicated during our last conversation (see my telegram No. 77),<sup>1</sup> that is to say, make every effort to negotiate without delay and agree on all points where agreement was possible. The Czechoslovak Government would thereby show their good faith, and make it easier for His Majesty's Government to give any eventual help.<sup>2</sup> Minister for Foreign Affairs seemed to think that Nationalities Statute might have to be put into force without negotiations. I suggested that, unless this proved unavoidable, it would be a tactical error not to [? consult with]<sup>3</sup> Henlein party and give them any credit possible for concessions made.

As regards Henlein's demands, he said nothing about that for a revision of foreign policy except that Czechoslovakia could not help being a bulwark against German expansion in the sense that geographically she lay between Germany and South-Eastern Europe. He made brief references to eight points to the following effect:—

<sup>1</sup> No. 143.

<sup>2</sup> On May 3 Mr. Newton was informed that his language was approved, but it was presumed that he had made it clear that he was speaking only of the diplomatic help which His Majesty's Government might be able to afford to Czechoslovakia at Berlin, if and when an appropriate moment arrived. In his reply, on May 10, Mr. Newton reported himself as satisfied that Dr. Krofta 'was and is under no illusion as to the help His Majesty's Government have in mind'. He had repeated to Dr. Krofta what he had already said, as instructed (see No. 139), to President Benes, and had again repeated this warning to Dr. Krofta on May 7 (see below No. 195).

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

1. Was already accepted.
2. Was not acceptable.
3. Closed settlements were inadmissible. He observed Aussig had in 17th century been entirely Czech and that migrations from one area to another could not be prohibited.
4. He did not know how far this was intended to go.
5. Existed.
6. Was impracticable.
7. Would not be difficult unless it was meant that in German area there should be 'only' German officials.
8. Was very far reaching and dangerous. Individuals could profess national socialism as much as any other form of philosophy, but in demanding such freedom for themselves they could not be allowed to apply their principles to any particular group or area in such a manner as to restrict equality of freedom for others including Jews.

In reply to my enquiry regarding a plan by Herr Jaksch, of which I had read in the 'Daily Telegraph', Minister for Foreign Affairs said these proposals seemed to him in their general lines to be sensible and acceptable.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 159

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 26)*

*No. 101 Telegraphic [C 3470/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 26, 1938

My telegram No. 84, Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Henlein was probably sincere when he said that his demands might have gone further. For example, he probably only refrained from demanding a plebiscite because the Government of the Reich has not yet made up its mind how far it wishes to go. Meanwhile, the local elections may be regarded in interested quarters as a kind of preliminary canter and a forecast of what a plebiscite would reveal.

Even if Henlein is sincere, which I doubt, in giving to visitors the impression . . .<sup>2</sup> independent of the Reich, his extremist followers who remain under influence of absorption of Austria are in the ascendant, and would certainly be ready, for their part, to take their orders from National Socialist headquarters in the Reich.

(Repeated to Berlin, Saving, and Paris.)

<sup>1</sup> No. 157.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain. Mr. Newton had telegraphed on April 22 that the Czechoslovak Government knew that Herr Henlein had been received 'quite recently' by Herr Hitler, Field-Marshal Göring, and Dr. Goebbels.

*Memorandum<sup>1</sup> on the Nationality Policy of the Czechoslovak Republic*  
[C 3460/1941/18]

## I

*The Present Nationality Policy of Czechoslovakia*

When, as a result of the negotiations at the Peace Conference, Germans and Magyars remained within the frontiers of the Czechoslovak Republic, this was not due to any desire on the part of the Czechoslovak nation to rule over foreign races, but was solely the outcome of historical and geographical circumstances. The Germans in what are known as the Sudeten territories, separated by a natural mountain barrier from the inhabitants of Germany, have lived side by side with the Czechs for many centuries, and comprise with them a single economic and geographical unit. The Magyars in Slovakia were included in the Czechoslovak State owing to the necessity of frontiers drawn with practical requirements, and also with due regard to essential economic and political factors.

The Czechoslovak majority and its political representatives have always been aware that they could not create a nationally uniform State, and they duly reckoned with the fact that any policy aiming at the continued security of the Czechoslovak Republic must endeavour to create reasonable conditions for the existence and development of the other nationalities there. From the outset, therefore, they were determined to solve the nationality problems of their State equitably.

The Czechoslovak majority never had in mind a purely national Czechoslovak State, but their ideal was a democratic State which would ensure justice for all citizens and thus, also, for all nationalities. The policy of the majority was developed in this direction in the three following stages:—

The first stage involved the development of the democratic foundations of the State by a modern democratic Constitution, which guarantees all rights for the other nationalities in accordance with the stipulations of the international treaties, and which in many respects goes beyond the scope of these treaties. Further, a modern democratic system of franchise for all legislative and local government bodies, modern educational legislation, and many other legal measures of the widest possible scope, all of them ensuring full equality of rights for, and the free political and cultural development of, the other nationalities. The achievement which the Czechoslovak Constitution and legislative measures represent has met with wide recognition, and all criticisms of it before international bodies have proved to be unfounded.

The second stage in the Czechoslovak nationality policy comprised a settlement between the Czechoslovak majority and the other nationalities in all matters in which the pre-war Austro-Hungarian régime created

<sup>1</sup> This memorandum was communicated by the Czechoslovak Minister on April 26.



flagrant inequalities to the disadvantage of the Czechoslovaks. This involved, in particular, an equitable rearrangement of the educational system, the abolition of the privileged position of the Germans and the Magyars in the administrative apparatus and in economic affairs. This adjustment, resulting logically from the application of democratic principles, led, for instance to the reduction of the number of German schools in the Sudeten territories wherever such schools were attended almost entirely by Czech children, and served the purpose of Germanisation. At the same time, however, it led to the building of German schools in Slovakia where a large German group had no schools whatever under the Hungarian régime. This policy was no doubt appreciated not only abroad but also by reasonable Germans and Magyars in Czechoslovakia, who realized that only an adjustment such as this could bring about the psychological conditions necessary for effective and lasting co-operation between the Czechoslovak majority and the other nationalities.

The third stage of Czechoslovak nationality policy may be termed the period of co-operation. It was marked by the participation of important German parties in the Government coalition and by German Ministers joining the Czechoslovak Government, in order to share in the administration of the State as equals among equals, in order to help to remove all obstacles to the effective mutual activities among the nationalities in the State, and to remedy such nationality injustices as might make themselves felt, whether on one side or the other. This period began in 1926, and has continued uninterruptedly until to-day.

2. On examining the practical results of this three-stage nationality policy we arrive at the following facts:—

The Czechoslovak nationality policy has safeguarded extensive civil and political liberties for all the nationalities in the republic; it has given them an opportunity of freely putting into effect whatever political ideas they may hold, of building up and developing political movements and cultural associations, of publishing periodicals and newspapers, and also of bringing their influence to bear upon economic matters.

This nationality policy has given them an equitable share in the legislative bodies, and thus a full opportunity of asserting their national interests. Thus of the 450 members of the Czechoslovak Chamber of Deputies and the Senate:—

106 (or 23 per cent.) are Germans.

18 (or 4 per cent.) are Magyars.

2 (or .5 per cent.) are Poles.

9 (or 2 per cent.) are Ruthenes.

These percentages correspond almost precisely with the actual numerical strength of the respective nationalities in the State. Here it may be added that Czechoslovakia has adopted for all purposes a universal franchise with proportional representation.

This policy has also given these nationalities an equitable share in many branches of the internal administration of the provinces, the districts, and

the parishes, and thus, to a considerable degree has already brought about national local government for these nationalities. In the provincial councils (Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia), where half the representatives are elected and half appointed,<sup>2</sup> the national representation is as follows:

In the Province of Bohemia: 37 German members and 83 Czech.

In the Province of Moravia-Silesia: 14 German members and 44 Czech.

In the Province of Slovakia: 5 Magyar members and 49 Czechs and Slovaks.

In the Province of Carpathian Ruthenia: 2 Magyar members and 15 Ruthenes and Russian[s].

The democratic franchise places 3,363 parishes and 46 districts in Bohemia in German hands completely, and in Slovakia the Magyars have 13 districts.

The effects of Czechoslovak nationality policy are strikingly revealed in the domain of education. Here, in a number of departments the proportion of Germans actually exceeds the 22 per cent. which belong to them by right. According to the statistics of the 31st October, 1936, the Germans are provided with the following:—

3,311 elementary schools with 9,142 classes and 9,162 teachers.

455 higher elementary schools with 2,198 classes and 2,626 teachers.

90 secondary schools.

198 specialist schools.

2 technical colleges.

1 university.

3,357 public libraries.

In the same way the Magyars are educationally equipped as follows:—

875 elementary schools with 2,221 classes and 2,209 teachers.

25 higher elementary schools with 135 classes and 153 teachers.

11 secondary schools.

79 specialist schools.

622 public libraries.

As regards the Poles, they have—

90 elementary schools with 245 classes and 241 teachers.

11 higher elementary schools with 65 classes and 78 teachers.

2 secondary schools.

24 specialist schools.

74 public libraries.

In point of fact, the Germans, Magyars and Poles in Czechoslovakia are much better equipped with schools than the Germans, Poles and Magyars in Germany, Hungary and Poland respectively. A comparison of official data shows, for instance, that, while there is one German elementary school in

<sup>2</sup> On May 4 Mr. Troutbeck, First Secretary at H.M. Legation in Prague, drew the attention of the Foreign Office to the fact that actually of the representatives in the provincial councils 'two thirds are elected and one third appointed'. Mr. Troutbeck added: 'I don't know why the Czechs themselves made this mistake.'

Czechoslovakia per 862 German inhabitants, on an average in neighbouring Prussia there is 1 German school per 1,112 head of population; again in Czechoslovakia there is 1 Magyar school per 810 inhabitants; in neighbouring Hungary there is 1 school per 1,191 head of population. Finally, 1 Polish school in Czechoslovakia serves 809 Polish inhabitants, while in neighbouring Poland there is 1 school per 952 head of population.

The nationality policy of the Czechoslovak Republic, judged impartially as regards the status of the individual nationalities in political and cultural life, will bear comparison with the nationality policy of any other State. It provides the nationalities with the necessary conditions for maintaining their national existence and for developing fully along cultural lines, and it also enables them to have their say in political matters. In this respect Czechoslovakia takes rank with Switzerland and Belgium. Indeed, there is no other country in Europe the nationality policy of which is so advanced and liberal.

3. If, despite these facts, Czechoslovak nationality policy, especially as regards the Germans, has encountered new difficulties during recent years, this is because the normal development of this policy has been handicapped by two sets of factors:—

- (a) The first of these was the economic crisis, which began to show its effects in the industrial districts of Czechoslovakia during 1929. This crisis made itself felt particularly in the German areas because of their largely industrial character. (The Czech districts, being more agrarian, suffered less in this respect.) As a result, the Germans, who before the crisis had found ample opportunities for work in private concerns, now began to make greater claims on the State in respect of employment. Moreover, their dissatisfaction with the social conditions which had thus arisen assumed a nationalistic aspect.
- (b) The second factor resulted from the rise of the National Socialist movement in neighbouring Germany and its ideological and political expansion and propaganda. This influenced the Germans in Czechoslovakia and intensified their national feeling. Finally, it led to the formation of the Henlein movement, which was recruited at the expense of the activist parties and associated itself with new economic and political demands.

The Czechoslovak Government, within the limits of its financial capacity, has fulfilled its duty towards all the areas of the State. Its schemes of unemployment benefit, measures for social welfare and public works, as well as its efforts to gain new markets, its credit and financial policy, were all developed for the express purpose of alleviating the effects of the crisis throughout the State, and hence, of course, primarily in the German districts. The decision of the Government on the 18th February, 1937, which met with the approval of the activist German parties, shows in how marked a manner the consequences of the crisis in the German areas were reflected in the nationality policy of the State. By this decision, appointments to the State service, the

allocation of Government tenders, and the assessment of public grants for cultural purposes were to be made on a basis strictly proportional to the numerical strength of the nationality concerned. The practical application of this decision was started immediately in order to cope with the requirements due to the economic crisis, and in order also to demonstrate that the Czechoslovak Government was fully prepared to utilise all its resources which would promote the interests of an equitable nationality policy in the spirit of the Czechoslovak Constitution.

The decision of the 18th February, 1937, is also the nucleus of a still more thoroughgoing nationality policy in Czechoslovakia, which the Government is now elaborating in every possible way. In doing so, its purpose is to achieve a fundamental solution of the problem, with particular regard to the more radical demands of Henlein's party.

## II

### *The Legal and Other Measures which the Czechoslovak Government now has in Preparation*

In view of the circumstances previously mentioned and the political situation now prevailing, the Czechoslovak Government is anxious to take further measures to supplement the existing nationality legislation, and to develop it into a complete system of nationality law. For this purpose the Government has decided to link together all the nationality laws hitherto in force, so as to produce a uniform Statute of Nationality Laws of the Czechoslovak Republic. All the rights guaranteed to the nationalities by the treaties signed at the Peace Conference in 1919 are also being incorporated therein.

Accordingly, with due regard to the grievances voiced by the citizens of German nationality in particular during recent years, the Government has decided to apply the following measures for the purpose of rounding off nationality policy:—

(1) The stipulations contained in the existing language law will be supplemented, so that the law will be liberally applied according to requirements also in Government concerns, such as the railways, the post offices, &c. In addition, measures are being adopted by which the State authorities, in dealing with local affairs, will use the language of the individual nationalities to the fullest possible extent. Under this scheme, too, the same principle is to hold good for practical purposes as regards the central and district authorities also. In this way any considerations of prestige affecting the use of the official Czechoslovak language in contact with the nationalities which may still exist in Czechoslovak legislation are to give way to the practical needs of efficient administration.

(2) The Nationality Statute will be further supplemented by a special law against denationalisation. This will make it impossible for any nationality to be exposed to undue influence either of the majority population, the political or educational authorities or to economic pressure. From this point of view



administrative and legal measures will be especially effective to prevent the exploitation of the minority schools, both Czech and German, and to avoid the use of pressure to compel German children to attend Czech schools and Czech children to attend German schools.

(3) The principle will be established and applied that, in the State administration, especially in the post office, the railways, the law courts, the schools and the administration of the provinces (Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia), the number of official posts allotted to each nationality will be in accordance with the proportion of the respective nationality to the total population of the Republic. The working details of this measure are to be agreed upon by direct negotiation with the nationalities concerned, and particularly with the Germans.

(4) The method of procedure for increasing the existing number of officials and State employees to the appropriate quota will be settled during the discussion of these matters with the Germans. This will demand a certain amount of time, as it is not possible to appoint so many extra officials at once, and the Germans themselves have not a sufficient number of qualified candidates. This is obviously a matter which needs firm and unambiguous settlement, if disputes and recriminations are to be avoided in the future.

(5) The principle will be established, and its application guaranteed, that the Germans (and the other nationalities) are to receive their appropriate quota of the various budget items. Thus, 22 per cent. of the education estimates will be guaranteed for the use of the German educational system, 22 per cent. of Government tenders will be earmarked for German firms, and so on.

(6) It will be guaranteed that the appointment of State officials and employees in the districts populated by the nationalities will always be so arranged that a considerable percentage of the members of the appropriate nationalities should administer the affairs of that nationality, in order that a great degree of what the Germans in the Czechoslovak Republic call 'Selbstverwaltung' should be attained. In view of the fact that the parishes and the districts to-day already have complete and unrestricted local government, one of the principal demands of the Germans will be satisfied to the fullest possible extent compatible with the interests of the State and its administrative unity.

(7) A law will be drafted and put into practice concerning the administration of schools in a form compatible with the unity of all school administration in the republic and with the unity of the State. The existing legal apparatus will be utilised for this purpose in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, where special provincial school councils already exist or will be set up, and these will be divided into national sections. Each section will be directed exclusively by officials of the appropriate nationality, and the whole educational system of that nationality will be subordinated to them (elementary, higher elementary, secondary, specialist schools) under the supreme control of the Ministry of Education. This Ministry will also be staffed with officials of the appropriate nationalities, who will report on the schools of their particular nationality. One of the most important demands of the Germans



will thus be satisfied in a form compatible with State unity and within the scope of the Constitution.

(8) A law will be promulgated concerning a State guarantee for damages resulting from incorrect decisions on the part of the authorities. This will apply especially to nationality matters.

(9) Inspectorates will be set up in the various branches of the Administration (political, taxes, police, education, &c.), the purpose of which it will be to ensure that, in nationality matters, the subordinate officials adopt an impartial and courteous attitude. This is intended as a method of removing what the Germans describe as 'a policy of pin-pricks', which is due to the failure of the subordinate authorities to act in accordance with the spirit of the State policy as a whole, and to show the utmost impartiality towards the nationalities. In this way, too, progress will be made in the training of State officials to achieve a conciliatory and tolerant nationality policy.

### III

#### *Conclusion*

The Czechoslovak Government regards itself as justified in claiming that, by putting these measures into effect, it is contributing largely towards the satisfaction of its German inhabitants and the other nationalities, in a manner compatible with the unity of the State and the spirit of the Constitution. It may here be pointed out that measures analogous to those now being introduced exist only in the present Belgian Constitution.

The concessions which are now being granted, however, are not so unrestricted as to lessen the Republic's internal cohesion and outward powers of resistance. Its internal cohesion would be weakened, for instance, by any suggestion of territorial autonomy leading to disintegration. Even if the jurisdiction of autonomy [*sic*: ? autonomy of jurisdiction] did not affect matters involving defence, finance, &c., the fact that in the districts close to the State frontiers the representatives of the central authorities were performing their duties side by side with those of the local government, would undermine the efficiency of the State power precisely in the areas containing the State fortifications, and thus also the key-points of State security from a military point of view. Apart from such considerations as this, it should be emphasised that in the frontier areas the nationalities are so split up and scattered as to make territorial autonomy an impossibility.

The internal cohesion of the State would likewise be weakened at this moment by any measure demanding a change of the Constitution. Czechoslovakia is the only Central European State which has possessed an unmodified Constitution ever since it was founded. If to-day, at a period of abnormal tension, any change in the Constitution were undertaken, this would be interpreted by the public as a sign of some serious internal crisis, and it would cause further tension and alarm both among Czechoslovaks and Germans. In a country that has hitherto enjoyed remarkable freedom from disturbance, such a development as this would not be in the interests of general peace.

We are therefore grateful to Mr. Chamberlain for having expressly stated in his speech on the 24th March last that any acceptable solution of the nationality question in Czechoslovakia must be restricted to the scope of the Constitution.

At the same time, as we have already pointed out, the Czechoslovak Government is making a great effort to satisfy the other nationalities. In so doing, it is anxious to demonstrate its goodwill, and by these new concessions it hopes to contribute to the general pacification of Europe, which is now passing through a period of such tension.

By proceeding immediately to practical discussions with the representatives of the German political parties, and especially with the Sudeten German party, the Czechoslovak Government is doing its utmost to arrive at an agreement. Moreover, it will loyally and unswervingly carry out whatever settlement may be reached.

The Czechoslovak Government is bringing this scheme of action to the notice of the British and French Governments, in order that they may judge for themselves the sincerity of the motives prompting this effort to promote the general peace of Europe.

#### No. 161

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27)*

*No. 102 Telegraphic [C 3526/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 26, 1938

My telegram No. 95.<sup>1</sup>

I have also called on President of the Council who was less perturbed than the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Although Dr. Hodza did not wish to underrate the importance of Herr Henlein's speech he thought it was undoubtedly influenced by the coming elections. Until they were over serious negotiations were not possible nor, as he knew privately and confidentially, desired by the party.

Meanwhile he would continue with informal conversations and the Minister of the Interior was also constantly in touch with the Henlein party in regard to police measures. It was realised that for the time being an eye and an ear must on occasion be closed. On May 1 some processions and demonstrations would be allowed as a safety valve.

Dr. Hodza said that his policy remained that of negotiation wherever and whenever possible and the avoidance of incidents meanwhile. He did not care to express any opinion just now as to the prospects of ultimate success but he intimated that much would depend on the attitude and feelings of Germany. If no limit were set to the overweening pretensions of Dr. Goebbels a settlement would hardly be possible. But if a balance of power were re-established in Europe, then both the Sudetic German problem could be solved and German hegemony over the Danube could be prevented. He

<sup>1</sup> No. 158.

hoped that eventually the Danubian States could become what he called an 'Island of Objectivity'. By that he meant, so far as I could fathom, a kind of reserved area aloof from the political rivalries of the Great Powers. He paid a special tribute to the work of Sir G. Knox in promoting a policy of co-operation in Hungary. He realised, however, that prospects were bad at present. For various reasons he feared that the soil there was favourable to National Socialist propaganda and the revival of revisionist claims.

Reverting to the Sudetic question Dr. Hodza thought the large majority of the party was ready and qualified for negotiation. But there was an extreme minority deriving its strength from a youth which disliked control. It would depend on the attitude of Berlin which got the upper hand, and he evidently hoped that Berlin would in due course be favourably influenced as a result of pressure from and negotiations with the Great Powers. He for his part would do all in his power to keep order in Czechoslovakia and prepare the ground for serious and formal negotiations which however in view of the Carlsbad speeches would clearly now be futile until the elections were over, that is, early in June.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin and Budapest.

### CHAPTER III

Anglo-French conversations, April 28-29; instructions for proposed *démarches* at Prague and Berlin,  
May 4  
(April 27-May 18, 1938)

#### No. 162

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27)*  
*No. 128 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3477/1941/18]*

PARIS, April 27, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs summoned me this morning to tell me that he has received disquieting news from Berlin both from French Ambassador and from French personages who have just seen Field-Marshal Göring. The latter, it seems, said that Germany meant to settle question of Czechoslovakia this summer at the latest.

M. Bonnet even fears that Germans may act forcibly next month. His Excellency therefore thinks it essential that Czechoslovakia should be discussed tomorrow in London fundamentally, and that it shall be decided what action France and Great Britain should take in the event of Germany attempting to repeat in the near future towards Czechoslovakia her action against Austria.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

#### No. 163

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 29)*  
*No. 105 Telegraphic [C 3620/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, April 28, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed me that M. Paul-Boncour asked the Russian Government what their attitude would be if France had to come to the assistance of Czechoslovakia. Russian Government had replied that they would immediately honour their obligations.

Dr. Krofta further mentioned that there were signs of better relations between Roumania and Russia as Roumania was becoming more frightened of Germany than of Russia.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Bucharest and Moscow.

*Record<sup>1</sup> of Anglo-French Conversations, held at No. 10 Downing Street, on  
April 28 and 29, 1938<sup>2</sup>  
[C 3687/13/17]*

Present:

*United Kingdom—*

Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Viscount Halifax, Sir R. Vansittart, Hon. Sir A. Cadogan, Sir O. Sargent, Mr. W. Strang and Mr. F. K. Roberts.

*France—*

M. Édouard Daladier, M. Georges Bonnet, M. Charles Corbin, M. Alexis Léger, M. Charles Rochat (Head of European Department, Ministry for Foreign Affairs) and M. Roland de Margerie (French Embassy).

FIRST MEETING, APRIL 28, 10.30 A.M.

PRELIMINARY

Mr. Chamberlain opened the proceedings by saying how delighted he and Lord Halifax were to meet M. Daladier and M. Bonnet, the latter of whom was an old friend. He hoped, and confidently expected, that these conversations would find the two Governments in complete agreement. He recognised that the agenda was long, and time was short. He would not, therefore, waste any time at the opening, and enquired whether the agenda which had been drawn up (Annex I) was agreeable to the French Ministers, and whether they had any observations regarding the order in which the subjects should be taken.

M. Daladier wished to assure Mr. Chamberlain and His Majesty's Government generally of their gratitude for the cordial reception they had received. His first words, therefore, were to thank Mr. Chamberlain and congratulate him on his realism in concluding an agreement of the greatest importance for European peace. The French Government fully appreciated the value of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. As regards the question which Mr. Chamberlain had asked, the French Ministers gladly accepted the agenda as a basis of discussion, and had no observations to offer in that connexion.

Mr. Chamberlain suggested that it might be convenient to take Items 7 (contacts between the British and French Air Staffs) and 8 (purchase, perhaps on a joint basis, of supplies such as food-stuffs and petrol in time of war)

<sup>1</sup> These notes were made by the British representatives for the use of His Majesty's Government.

<sup>2</sup> This meeting had originally been proposed for an earlier date (see Nos. 62, 83 and 109) but had been postponed owing to the change in the French Government.



after Item 3, instead of as they were placed on the agenda. He thought it would be advantageous to make this rearrangement.<sup>3</sup>

M. Daladier agreed.

#### 7. STAFF CONVERSATIONS

Lord Halifax suggested that it was important to review, very briefly, past history:

On the 24th March His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris informed the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, with reference to the obligations assumed by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom towards France under the Treaty of Locarno, that with a view to implementing their obligations in the case of unprovoked aggression, His Majesty's Government proposed at an early date to authorise confidential communications, on a technical footing, between the British and French Air Staffs. His Majesty's Government promised to make a further communication to the French Government on this subject in due course.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom had now given further consideration to this question, and they desired to take this opportunity of explaining in greater detail what they had in mind.

His Majesty's Government considered that the communications that will now be undertaken between the British and French staffs should be regarded as arising out of the second paragraph of section III of the arrangement reached in London on the 19th March, 1936,<sup>4</sup> after the occupation by Germany of the demilitarised zone in the Rhineland, and as being covered by the understanding reached between the two Governments at that time, as expressed in the notes exchanged on the 1st April, 1936,<sup>5</sup> that such contacts between the two staffs should be clearly understood on both sides not to give rise in respect of either Government to any political undertaking, nor to any obligation regarding the organisation of national defence. His Majesty's Government would also wish it to be clearly understood that the contacts now proposed will not give rise to any obligation regarding the employment of defence forces.

His Majesty's Government would suggest that the political assumption upon which the proposed staff contacts would be founded should be confined to the obligations undertaken by His Majesty's Government towards France and Belgium under the Treaty of Locarno; and by France towards the United Kingdom in the statement made by M. Delbos on the 4th December, 1936, as reaffirmed by the French Government in their memorandum of the 9th April, 1938. Germany alone would be assumed to be the aggressor, and the contacts would not envisage the extension of war to other Powers, whether as

<sup>3</sup> Items 1 (Anglo-Italian and Franco-Italian Relations), 2 (Abyssinia), 3 (Spain) were discussed, as separate subjects, at this first meeting. The record of the conversations in these subjects will be printed elsewhere in the Collection. Item 8 (Purchase of Supplies in time of war) was discussed at the second meeting. Items 9 (Swiss Neutrality) and 10 (Far East) and other miscellaneous business were dealt with briefly at the end of the concluding meeting.

<sup>4</sup> For the text see Cmd. 5134 of 1936.

<sup>5</sup> For the text see Cmd. 5149 of 1936.

potential enemies or as potential allies. His Majesty's Government, after the fullest consideration, did not consider that any political assumptions going beyond this were either necessary or desirable at the present time.

His Majesty's Government also took this opportunity to inform the French Government what, in their judgment, would in present circumstances be the character of their participation in a war arising in the circumstances outlined above. So far as His Majesty's Government were concerned—and this would also, he imagined, be true of the French Government—the first and main effort of each of us must be directed to home defence. His Majesty's Government were, moreover, compelled to ensure the preservation of the trade routes, with all that that involved. This implied the defence of British territories overseas. His Majesty's Government were, as the French Government were aware, at present engaged in the reorganisation and re-equipment of their land defence forces. As a result of these two considerations, His Majesty's Government had come to the conclusion, which would be no surprise to the French Government, that the form which their assistance to France on the hypothesis we were contemplating would chiefly take, would be by sea and in the air.

As regards naval contacts, in view of the fact that the effective co-operation of the British and French fleets could be concerted very quickly after the outbreak of war, and since the political assumption which he had mentioned earlier and which formed the basis of this communication did not call for any redistribution in time of peace of the British and French fleets, it was not, in our judgment, necessary to hold naval staff conversations at present.

So far as the air position and the contacts between the two air staffs were concerned, His Majesty's Government would propose that confidential communications should be conducted on a technical footing between the British and French air staffs, and that those conversations should have the following scope:—

- (a) An interchange of information as to the capacity of the two air forces at the present time, and the extent to which this may be expected to develop in the future;
- (b) Plans for the movement to France on the outbreak of war and the subsequent maintenance and protection in France of a British advanced air striking force. Full discussion regarding the aerodromes and other facilities which would be required in France for this purpose;
- (c) The co-ordination of the two air defence systems, including the linking-up of the observation and warning systems. Arrangements for the passage of Royal Air Force bombers, both home based and advanced, over the territory covered by the French air defence system;
- (d) A general discussion of the methods by which the two air forces might co-ordinate their operations in war, due regard being paid to the fact that the primary duty of each country is to provide for its own defence.

His Majesty's Government would propose that in the first instance these

communications should be opened through the respective air attachés, and that they might be pursued in connexion with the exchange of visits by air force officers which might take place from time to time. It might also be found desirable at a later stage for British air force officers to visit French aerodromes.

So far as purely land forces are concerned they had reached the conclusion that in present circumstances, with the best will in the world, the greatest measure of help that they could in present circumstances immediately hope to contribute, if the Government of the day, after considering their other military commitments at home and abroad to which he had alluded, should decide to despatch a military force to France, would be two divisions. The War Office had intimated, however, that these divisions would not necessarily be completely equipped with material regarded as essential for modern war, and they might also be short in certain effectives. This force could be landed in France within fourteen days from the date on which the decision was taken to despatch it. His Majesty's Government would emphasise that the statement which they were now making referred to the situation as it existed at this moment. His Majesty's Government would keep the situation under review, and, if in course of time any modification of this statement was called for, His Majesty's Government would make a further communication to the French Government.

His Majesty's Government would accordingly be glad to learn from the French Government whether the establishment of contacts between the two air staffs on the basis outlined above would be acceptable to the French Government.

There was one other connected matter to which he wished to draw attention. His Majesty's Government had given some thought to the question whether both sides should agree to keep the suggested conversations secret or treat this matter differently. His Majesty's Government were inclined, subject to the views of the French Government, to think it would be wiser to forestall any undesirable reactions in Germany or in Italy by telling the German and Italian Governments frankly that we were having air staff conversations, if it were so decided, and telling them on what basis these were being held. His Majesty's Government's anxiety lay in the fact that it would probably not be possible, and might not even be desirable to keep these conversations secret. If they became known, feelings of suspicion or resentment might well be generated in Germany or Italy which a preliminary communication might obviate. He had, therefore, drafted a telegram to the British Ambassadors in Berlin and Rome, but before sending off this telegram he would appreciate the views of the French Government as to whether they concurred in the proposed telegram.

(Copies of the draft telegram (Annex III) were communicated to the meeting.)

The French Ministers said they would like to consider this telegram before the afternoon session.

(The meeting then adjourned.)

7. STAFF CONVERSATIONS (*continued*)

M. Daladier thanked His Majesty's Government, and in particular the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax, for the extremely interesting communication made to them before lunch, containing detailed and precise proposals on the part of His Majesty's Government. He wished to state frankly and loyally that, as regards the general policy of the two countries, both Governments would no doubt have to consider very carefully their views on the general situation. We were arriving at what might be termed almost a dramatic moment in the life of Europe. But for the present he did not wish to enlarge on these general considerations, and preferred to keep strictly to the precise technical considerations advanced in His Majesty's Government's communication.

(a) *The Air*.—As regards the co-operation of the air forces, the ideas of His Majesty's Government were, in general, perfectly satisfactory to the French Government and would provide for a very useful co-ordination of the forces of the two countries which should be sufficient to form an important contribution to general pacification.

(b) *The Army*.—He felt, however, that the defence of a country's territory demanded the co-operation of all its armed forces. From this logical premise the French Government had set up a Ministry of National Defence. In England we had in Sir T. Inskip a Minister for the Co-ordination of National Defence. In Germany Field-Marshal von Blomberg had exercised control over the whole national defence, and he, M. Daladier, exercised similar powers in France. It was extremely difficult to separate the component parts in the national defence system without serious disadvantages, endangering their harmonious co-operation. He therefore considered it indispensable that His Majesty's Government should agree to analogous steps being taken in the case of the two armies to those which were proposed for the two air forces. The air force and the army had to work in the closest co-operation. The arrangements necessary for air bases and for the linking-up of the observation and warning systems would necessitate the closest co-operation between the army and the air force. He considered that it would be extremely useful if, at the beginning of a conflict, Great Britain could send two divisions to France. He fully appreciated that Great Britain had many other demands which she had to meet, and it would not therefore be right to ask for more than this. But he considered that these two divisions would be more useful if they were both motorised divisions. The French Government understood that in view of the great efforts Great Britain was making on sea and in the air, she could not do anything on the same scale as regards her land armaments. But two motorised divisions were surely not too much to ask. It was, after all, not a question of effectives, but of material, and he thought it ought not to be beyond the capacity of British industry to equip these divisions accordingly. He knew that British industry could construct extremely well tanks and other requirements of mechanised troops. The French Govern-



ment would therefore welcome a decision to motorise these two divisions, and so make the British military effort on the outbreak of war of much greater utility. To sum up, as regards land armaments, the French Government would be glad if the British Government could agree to—

- (1) Motorising the two divisions to be sent to France.
- (2) Certain contacts between the Army Staffs.

(c) *The Navy*.—As regards the navy, M. Daladier wished to point out that the French navy had two main tasks. The first and most important was the defence of French interests in the Mediterranean and in North Africa. But an Atlantic fleet was also necessary, especially in view of recent events in Spain. The Mediterranean route might be interrupted, and it might therefore be necessary to send French colonial contingents to France by the Atlantic route. Provision was being made in the French budget for important improvements in the port of Dakar, with a view to bringing troops from Dakar by the Atlantic route in time of war. The French navy had these two essential rôles, and he repeated that the rôle of the Atlantic fleet was of particular importance after recent events in Spain. He fully appreciated the position of the British Admiralty, and did not wish to wound the Admiralty's susceptibilities in any way, but he thought it should be possible for the Admiralty to make a gesture and agree in time of peace to effect the contacts which would immediately become necessary in time of war.

He would finally emphasise in all good faith that he felt it was wrong to regard national defence as something which could be cut up into sections. On the contrary, the co-operation of all the national forces was essential for the defence of a country.

Mr. Chamberlain thanked M. Daladier for his frank and loyal exposition of French views on this important question. It was, of course, impossible to deny the logic of the views he had expressed regarding the inseparability of the different parts of a country's defence forces. But His Majesty's Government considered that if these conversations were to be useful it was essential to be frank. There was a difference between the position now and the position in 1914. Conditions had greatly changed, and, in particular, the air force was on a completely different scale. In Great Britain an air force of a very formidable character was being built up, and His Majesty's Government anticipated that this air force in case of war would play a part out of all proportion to that played by the British air force in the Great War.

The fact must, however, be faced that, although our resources were great, they were not unlimited. Not only had His Majesty's Government to consider the demands on industry which were being made in connexion with the air force, but they also had to consider the position as regards munitions. Here again there had been an important change since 1914. For example, it was no longer possible confidently to count upon being able to purchase munitions from the United States to the same extent as had been possible during the Great War.



Mr. Chamberlain felt he was at some disadvantage in discussing technical military questions on which M. Daladier was an expert; but, judging from the advice they received from their technical advisers, His Majesty's Government had to contemplate that, in the event of war arising with Germany, that country would endeavour to bring about a decision at the earliest possible moment by what has been called 'a knock-out blow.' Germany was well aware that in a long war her chances of final victory were much smaller. Therefore, it was to be expected that she would make a very great effort in the first days of a war. It was therefore necessary to be prepared to resist attack on a tremendous scale in the early days. So far as this country was concerned, the only possible form of attack was from the air. It was for this reason that His Majesty's Government were paying such great attention to the air force, and were developing it to the extent which was well known to the French Ministers.

His Majesty's Government also had to bear in mind that the demands upon their resources arising from wastage in the early days of the war would be extremely great. A war potential was, therefore, being built up in the shape of factories which would not normally be in operation, but which would come into operation as soon as the crisis arose. It might be necessary to produce munitions, under which term he included every kind of military equipment, on a scale much larger than in the Great War, because we might in a future war be entirely dependent upon our own resources. In this connexion, His Majesty's Government also had to consider the question of man power. It would obviously not be possible successfully to fulfil the industrial considerations to which he had just drawn attention, and provide equipment, &c., to the required extent and at the same time send a British army to serve abroad on the same scale as in the Great War.

These limitations had been readily recognised by M. Daladier, who had stated that an expeditionary force such as that mentioned by Lord Halifax would be extremely useful if it were motorised. He was not quite sure exactly what was meant by the term 'motorised.' Although the British divisions would, of course, be mechanised to a much greater extent than they had been in 1914, he admitted that they were not at present fully mechanised in accordance with modern conceptions. He must, however, emphasise that His Majesty's Government found it difficult to commit themselves at this stage to sending even such a comparatively small force to the Continent in certain eventualities. He could only say that the Government of the day might decide to do so, or they might not. In these circumstances he was doubtful how far conversations between the Army Staffs of the two countries, such as M. Daladier had proposed, could be really useful at this stage. They could only be conducted on the hypothetical basis he had explained. He would be glad if conversations on such a limited and hypothetical basis were thought useful, but, in his view, the military participation of Great Britain in a war on the Continent would not be on a sufficient scale to justify conversations between the Army Staffs on the same lines as those envisaged between the Air Staffs. The British effort in the air would be much greater and would

be rendered immediately. He wished the French Government to have all these facts clearly in their minds.

In reply to a question from M. Corbin, Mr. Chamberlain stated that he saw no particular objection of principle to conversations being opened between the Naval Staffs, but His Majesty's Government could not help feeling that there was really nothing special requiring discussion so far as the two Navies were concerned. He fully appreciated the remarks M. Daladier had made about the use of the Atlantic route for French reinforcements, but he doubted whether this made special conversations between the two navies necessary.

M. Daladier clearly understood the special difficulties which would be created by German aggression. Germany had the advantage of being able to prepare her aggression in advance and to open an offensive without warning. France and Great Britain, on the contrary, were peace-loving nations and would certainly not be the first to strike. It was therefore very likely that they would have to be prepared to receive the first shock. In his view this was, however, an additional reason for co-ordinating our forces well in advance and preparing our resistance so far as it was possible to do so. He did not believe that great nations could be put out of action by a sudden sharp attack. In modern war the power of the defensive remained extremely strong. This had been illustrated in the Spanish war. On many occasions a weak screen of machine guns behind barbed wire had often resisted much more numerous and well armed troops. Provided all the armed forces of which the two countries disposed could be co-ordinated, he did not doubt our capacity successfully to resist aggression.

M. Daladier fully appreciated the great effort which Great Britain was making in respect of her air armaments. So far as France was concerned he could state quite definitely that the French army was certainly in a condition in which it could confront the German army victoriously. He admitted that the French air force was unfortunately not in an equally good state of preparation and was, in many respects, behindhand. He could, however, assure the British Ministers that great progress had been made in recent months. Four milliard francs were being devoted to the production of aircraft and 1 milliard francs to the equipment of air factories. The French difficulties did not lie in individual types, since the French types were, in many cases, faster than the German types. The French weakness lay in the transition from the production of types to industrial production on a large scale. The French aircraft industry had remained an industry on an artisan basis, which had been frightened of embarking on any great expenditure or large-scale production. The aircraft which had been invented as long as three years ago were, in themselves, fully equal to the German aircraft. But mass production was not yet taking place on a sufficient scale. The French Government had concentrated upon the eradication of this main weakness by developing the aircraft industry and improving its equipment to facilitate mass production. The Air Minister, M. de la Chambre, had already achieved considerable progress and, by the end of the summer, the French Government hoped to double their present production. He had explained the position quite openly to the

British Ministers and admitted that it was still necessary to make a considerable effort.

He considered, however, that aviation by itself, could not win a war. The cohesion and co-ordination of all the component parts in the national defence system was essential and, in his view, the army remained the predominant factor. Nevertheless, he fully realised the importance of the Prime Minister's remarks regarding industrial production, and agreed that it was necessary to make a great effort in this respect in France, and also, he thought, in Great Britain. In this connexion he could not help feeling that the potential resources of French and British industry were much greater than they had been in 1914, since immense progress had been made since that date. He would recall that already, at the end of the war, French aircraft construction had reached the figure of 3,000 a month, and it was certain that the means of production had greatly increased since 1918.

He went on to suggest that it would be a wise measure to approach American industry now in regard to munition supplies without awaiting for the actual outbreak of war, and so obtain supplies and establish contacts capable of further development when needed. The French Government had already sent a mission to the United States to purchase American aeroplanes; somewhat to his surprise the mission had discovered that it seemed possible to obtain immediately the French Government's particular requirement, i.e., 100-150 Curtis fighters. Fewer difficulties had been encountered in this respect than he had expected. He repeated, therefore, his suggestion that American industry should be approached at this stage and that the way should thus be prepared for enlarging the scope of our demands upon American industry should need arise. He also thought it important not to neglect the Netherlands as a potential supplier of aeroplanes. He considered that the Fokker aeroplanes were as good as any others. It should not be forgotten that Fokker had offered his aircraft to France in the Great War, and when she had refused them, they had been accepted by Germany, with the result that for six months these Fokkers maintained complete air superiority over the British and French air force. There were, in his view, great possibilities for arranging sales and contracts with the United States and with the Netherlands, and perhaps also with other countries. Collaboration between France and Great Britain could also be organised and developed. For example, France could give to Great Britain certain of her tank designs, which were stronger and better than any others. She could also communicate particulars of her armoured plate, in which she had made great progress.

M. Daladier then turned to the question of collaboration between the two armies. If two British divisions were sent to France, even though these divisions were incompletely equipped, measures must be taken in advance for the disembarkation of these divisions and for their installation in France. Contacts between the two staffs were therefore necessary with this object in view in time of peace, and some conversations must take place, as it would be impossible on the outbreak of war to improvise the necessary arrangements for dealing with such a delicate and complicated matter.

He thought that it should not be impossible for His Majesty's Government to meet the difficulties of mechanising these two divisions. France had already motorised ten divisions. He would suggest that it might be easier for a great industrial country like Great Britain fully to motorise these divisions and so to economise in men, taking advantage of the fact that in modern war improvements in material permitted an economy in man-power, which could only be welcome to His Majesty's Government.

As regards the question of naval contacts, if he had understood Mr. Chamberlain correctly His Majesty's Government did not see any great objection in principle to the establishment of contact between the Naval Staffs, but were uncertain by what practical means and for what purpose such contacts should be established. He would suggest that if no difficulty in principle existed it should not be impossible to devise means for establishing such contacts which would be essential in time of war. In his view it would therefore only be wise to consider the problem beforehand in time of peace. To sum up, M. Daladier wished to emphasise that whatever importance was attached to any one factor in the general scheme of national defence it remained true that war represented one single complex problem and required that all the resources of a country should be brought into operation for the national defence.

Mr. Chamberlain felt that this conversation would have helped to clarify the situation. He would deal first with the question of air forces. What M. Daladier had said regarding the French air forces was not news to His Majesty's Government, and he was delighted that such great and successful efforts had been and were being made to increase the efficiency of the French air force. In Great Britain a great air force was now being built up in the shortest possible time, and His Majesty's Government had for their part been impressed with the great difficulties, often quite unexpected, which arose in the course of such an effort. In spite of the efforts which were being made it must, however, be some time before the two air forces would be in a completely satisfactory condition. M. Daladier had suggested that the industrial resources of France and Great Britain were now much greater than they had been in 1914. This was no doubt the case, but, on the other hand, a modern aeroplane was a very much more complicated and expensive machine than those which France had been able to produce at the rate of 3,000 a month in 1918.

He had been glad to learn that the French Government were investigating the possibility of filling up gaps in their air defence from sources of supply outside France. His Majesty's Government had also recently sent a mission to the United States of America not in order to purchase machines but to investigate the possibilities of making use of the American aircraft industry. He thought that collaboration between the French and British Governments would be desirable in order to avoid any overlapping in this connexion.

He wished to put forward another consideration. M. Daladier had very justly emphasised the great power of the defensive in modern warfare and illustrated this by the example of the Spanish civil war. Although he was not

himself an expert in these matters, he had formed the same impression, that the power of the defensive was generally on the increase. It had been shown that forms of attack previously considered irresistible could be met if the defence was sufficiently organised. It must, however, be admitted that Great Britain and France had been to some extent caught unawares by developments in Germany. The power of the offensive had been developed in Germany at such a rate that our own defensive measures had not kept pace with it. Our policy must, therefore, aim at securing a respite to develop our defensive resources to such an extent that, even if the power of the offensive on the other side had meanwhile developed at an increasing pace, we would then be able to regard it calmly and to resist an offensive victoriously if necessary. At the present moment we were, however, very far from this position and were extremely vulnerable.

The above considerations had a bearing on the question of staff conversations. They had seen recently the development of increasingly intimate relations between Germany and Italy. This had not got to the stage of an alliance, but until quite recently the Berlin-Rome axis had grown continuously stronger. The results of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, followed up by the Franco-Italian conversations, should presumably be to weaken the axis to some extent, but, in view of the weakness at present of our defensive position, he thought it necessary to be very careful not to undo any good which had been achieved by these conversations with Italy by exciting Italian or German suspicions that we were now devising fresh military, naval or aerial combinations designed to injure those two Powers.

He thought it most important to bear this consideration in mind. He agreed that contacts between the two Air Staffs were essential if we were to carry out our obligations under the Treaty of Locarno. But he did not think there was the same urgency in regard to naval conversations. He feared that these might still arouse Italian suspicions. Although, therefore, he would repeat that His Majesty's Government had no objection of principle to such naval conversations, he would suggest that it would be better tactics to begin with the air conversations and leave naval contacts to a later stage. He did not wish to be dogmatic in this respect, and was ready to consider any proposal which the French Ministers might wish to make. He wondered whether there was really any urgency about naval contacts. For example, it seemed to him that the Atlantic problem to which M. Daladier had alluded was really a matter for the French fleet, and not for co-operation between the two navies.

As regards the army, he was not himself sufficiently familiar with the details of army equipment to say exactly what would be required to convert two British divisions into fully motorised divisions. They were, of course, already mechanised to some extent. This point could, however, be discussed later when conversations took place. He wished, however, to make it clear at this stage that His Majesty's Government had no desire to commit themselves to sending two British divisions to France on the outbreak of war. The most he could definitely say was that this possibility was not excluded if the



Government of the day decided accordingly. During the course of the war we might, of course, send more than two divisions. The British public were, however, very nervous about land commitments, and His Majesty's Government were anxious to avoid being drawn unconsciously and against their will into any engagements regarding the assistance they could render on land in a continental war which might prevent them utilising British armed forces in the way considered most desirable in the national interest on the outbreak of war. Therefore, to undertake to equip two divisions specifically for a war on the Continent, rather than for the general purposes which His Majesty's Government at present envisaged, would be, in fact, a commitment which His Majesty's Government were not prepared to undertake. If, however, the above considerations were clearly understood, he would not see any objection to conversations being opened between the two army staffs in regard to the arrangements necessary for disembarkation and installation on the purely hypothetical basis that the two British divisions might be sent to France within fifteen days of the outbreak of war if the Government of the day so decided. He did not, however, want the French General Staff to draw up their plans on an assumption which might not be borne out in the event of war.

M. Daladier appreciated that His Majesty's Government found it necessary to avoid alarming British public opinion, and he understood their reluctance to risk strengthening the bonds between Germany and Italy by taking indiscreet or inopportune measures at this moment. Nevertheless, it was essential for the French authorities to study in advance how they were to organise the disembarkation in France and the installation of two British divisions on French territory. Two divisions would not, of course, be a contribution of capital importance in the event of war, but they would have a great moral importance. For example, they might influence Belgium in deciding whether to remain neutral or not, and their presence in France might permit the French Government to remove troops from the northern frontier, and to concentrate them on the eastern frontier. He thought that if the military attachés could be authorised to consider how to effect the transportation and installation of these divisions, this would be sufficient for the present. As regards naval conversations, he suggested that contacts through the naval attachés might be envisaged after the proposed contacts had already been established between the Air Staffs.

Lord Halifax said that if he had rightly understood M. Daladier, the following conclusions had been reached:—

- (1) As regards air contacts, the two Governments were in agreement;
- (2) As regard army contacts, His Majesty's Government recognised the force of what M. Daladier had said regarding the moral importance *vis-à-vis* other countries of having even so small a force as two British divisions on French soil. Subject to a full appreciation of Mr. Chamberlain's statement on behalf of His Majesty's Government to the effect that they could not be under any definite commitment to

send even two divisions to France on the outbreak of war, although circumstances might no doubt develop in such a way that more would, in fact, be sent later, and on that understanding His Majesty's Government would not be unwilling for the military position to be examined in the manner contemplated by M. Daladier. It would be convenient if such contacts were established through the medium of the military attachés, as was already contemplated for the first stage of the air contacts.

Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that such contacts would include the exchange of information about material, e.g., tanks, &c.

Lord Halifax said that as regards naval contacts, it would be satisfactory to His Majesty's Government, as he understood it would also be satisfactory to M. Daladier, that this matter should be examined by the two Governments, and that their views should be exchanged at a later stage without prejudice to the air and army contacts which would begin immediately.

M. Bonnet was under the impression that Mr. Chamberlain had been more positive as regards the navy and had accepted an arrangement which would give greater satisfaction to the French Government. If he had understood Mr. Chamberlain aright, a decision should be taken at this meeting for the establishment of contacts between Naval Staffs, although such a decision would only be put into execution at a later stage. Lord Halifax's suggestion differed from his understanding of the position, in that further conversations would still be required before such a decision of principle could be reached, whereas in the view of the French Government this should be decided at these conversations, even if the actual establishment of naval contacts was deferred until a more opportune moment. He pointed out that the opportunities for conversations between British and French Ministers at which such decisions could be taken were not very frequent.

Mr. Chamberlain wondered whether such a decision was really important in practice. British objections to the establishment of naval contacts were based not on principle, but only on expediency. Circumstances might change; but we could not determine in advance when they would so change. He would therefore suggest that it might be left open to decide at a later date the moment at which it would be desirable to begin naval conversations. In a week or so Herr Hitler would be meeting Signor Mussolini in Rome and that seemed to him a reason for not arriving at any definite decision at this moment. It was, after all, necessary to be extremely prudent to avoid any possible misunderstandings in Rome or Berlin.

M. Bonnet suggested that such considerations need not prevent a definite decision of principle being reached at this meeting, which could be made public at a later and more favourable moment, e.g., after the Rome meeting, to which Mr. Chamberlain had just alluded.

Mr. Chamberlain preferred to leave it on record that His Majesty's Government raised no objection of principle to the opening of conversations on naval matters; but he left it open to determine, in further discussion be-

tween the two Governments, the date on which such conversations should be opened.

M. Daladier expressed his agreement with such a formula.

Lord Halifax explained that there was no real difference between the British and French sides. There was certainly no question of principle dividing them. They understood each other's minds and His Majesty's Government had implicit confidence in the French Government, as they hoped the latter had in His Majesty's Government, but if anything were done at this table, which, if it became public at a later stage, could plausibly give the Italian Government the impression that His Majesty's Government had agreed to naval conversations at a moment when the sealing-wax was scarcely dry on the Anglo-Italian Agreement, this might have the most dangerous results. He would therefore prefer not to go beyond the position that no decision had actually been reached, but that there was a common understanding that both Governments could communicate with each other as and when the moment appeared opportune.

M. Daladier expressed his agreement and added that when it was a question of mutual confidence, as in this case, no possible difficulties could be raised from the French side.

Some discussion ensued regarding the establishment of contacts between the two Army Staffs. The conclusion reached was that the British Ministers agreed to the opening of contacts between the two Army Staffs, through the respective military attachés, for the purpose of determining the arrangements that would have to be made in the event of British forces being sent to France, taking into account the general observations as to the absence of any definite commitment made by British Ministers in opening the discussion.

In the course of the general discussion, Mr. Chamberlain made it clear that two divisions would be the maximum military force which could be sent to France on the outbreak of war, if the Government of the day decided in favour of sending a force. The possibility was not, however, excluded that at a later stage even more divisions might be sent. At the present moment, however, it was only possible to envisage conditions at the *outbreak* of war and two divisions represented the maximum which could be sent at that moment.

Mr. Chamberlain enquired whether the French Ministers had any observations to make on the proposed draft telegram to Berlin, of which copies had been communicated to them at the morning meeting (Annex III).

M. Bonnet said that the French Government had no objection to the first part of the telegram. They would, however, prefer to omit the last sentence of paragraph 3, as they considered it sufficient to refer to the Locarno obligations and thought that any reference to the notes exchanged in April 1936 would be unnecessary. They would also prefer to leave out the last four lines of paragraph 4, which would therefore end at '... well known to the German/Italian Government.'

M. Léger explained, in connexion with the last sentence of paragraph 3,

that the negative reference to the organisation of national defence should be left out because it conveyed an impression which was not in accordance with the facts, since this subject had, in fact, been discussed during the conversations.

Mr. Chamberlain did not anticipate that he would find any difficulty in accepting the proposed alterations, but wished to examine the matter further.

Lord Halifax said that if agreement was reached he proposed to send off this telegram to Berlin and Rome early on the 29th April, so that the necessary communication might be made to the German and Italian Governments before the final press communiqué was issued on the termination of the conversations.

A preliminary press communiqué (Annex IV) was agreed upon for issue to the press at the conclusion of the second meeting.

(The meeting adjourned at 4.45 p.m.)

### THIRD MEETING, APRIL 29, 10.45 A.M.

#### PRELIMINARY

Mr. Chamberlain had noticed that their efforts to keep the press within bounds had not been entirely successful, and most imaginative accounts of yesterday's discussions had appeared in this morning's press.

#### 4. CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Lord Halifax presumed that on both sides there was a full appreciation of the urgent gravity of the question of Czechoslovakia which they were about to consider. He would therefore not occupy time in trying to develop considerations which were present in all their minds. His Majesty's Government had raised the question of Czechoslovakia on two occasions recently with the French Government, and there was no subject to which they had looked forward more anxiously for a full and frank discussion.

His Majesty's Government were impressed by the danger of the situation which existed in Czechoslovakia. This situation had, of course, been greatly affected by what had recently passed in Austria, and the effect of Austrian events had immediately been strongly felt among the German minority in Czechoslovakia. According to information at the disposal of His Majesty's Government, the German minority were forming themselves more and more closely into a compact body under the leadership of Herr Henlein. They were clearly in a state of great exaltation, in so far as could be judged from recent manifestations of Sudeten opinion. Their general outlook was rapidly changing, and their demands were perpetually growing, not—he supposed—without [?] a] certain contact with Berlin. That seemed to be the present position so far as the Sudeten districts were concerned. On the other side of the frontier German opinion was also in a high state of exaltation, and the momentum generated by events in Austria might well, in certain circumstances, carry the German Government forward to further operations where, obviously, as we knew, the risk of disturbance to the peace of the world would be much greater than in the case of Austria. In these circumstances it might,

in our view, require only one serious incident in the Sudeten German country to precipitate very grave events. His Majesty's Government had in mind, and fully understood the position of the French Government, bound as they were by very precise engagements towards Czechoslovakia. His Majesty's Government had made their position plain in the speech made by the Prime Minister the other day in the House of Commons, in which he frankly stated what we must all realise to be the fact, that in the case of two countries situated as our two countries were, relations between them might have the effect of producing a situation in which the pressure of events was much stronger than any formal pronouncements. His Majesty's Government, on their side, regarded the future with an anxiety and a concern which was hardly less than that of the French Government. His Majesty's Government therefore felt—and they had no doubt that the French Government would also feel—that every step that was possible must be taken to avoid an outbreak which, as things now stood, might carry with it a very considerable risk for both France and Great Britain. He would not be speaking with the frankness which characterised the relations between the two countries if he did not make it plain that His Majesty's Government regarded the military situation, viewed specifically from the military angle, with considerable disquiet. Not only was the military situation of Czechoslovakia exceedingly weak; His Majesty's Government could not regard the position of France and Great Britain as very encouraging in the event of a German attack upon Czechoslovakia, in consequence of which France might feel it her duty to take the offensive against Germany, and as a further consequence of which Great Britain might find herself involved in the ensuing war.

For their part, His Majesty's Government were ready and, indeed, anxious to lend the fullest support in their power to whatever might make for European peace. They were not, however, able, as the Prime Minister had explained in the House of Commons, to assume fresh military commitments. The Prime Minister had given reasons for this in the House of Commons, and there was also this additional reason: When recent events had occurred in Austria, His Majesty's Government had instructed their Chiefs of Staff to make a full examination of the Czechoslovak problem from the military point of view. The result of that examination, which he did not think necessary to examine in any detail, was to reveal what an extremely difficult military problem, if viewed from the purely military angle, the defence of Czechoslovakia presented, and the difficulty increased in proportion as Germany proceeded with the refortification of the Rhineland.

They also had to bear in mind such deductions as they had been able to draw from their information on the present position in Russia and Poland. As regards Russia, recent events, such as the execution of many members of the Higher Command of the army, and the general state of internal unrest in that country, made it extremely doubtful whether Russia could be counted upon to make any great contribution, if, indeed, she could make any contribution at all, to the protection of Czechoslovakia if that country were attacked by Germany. The position of Poland was, in the view of His



Majesty's Government, uncertain, and at best it would not be possible to count upon any help being forthcoming from that quarter. His Majesty's Government had only recently made representations at Warsaw in the sense of exhorting the Polish Government to endeavour to be more helpful in her attitude towards the difficulties of Czechoslovakia. Although he hoped that these representations might have some effect, he did not think it would be such as to alter his general appreciation of the position of Poland in regard to the main issue with which we were concerned.

It therefore followed, in the judgment of His Majesty's Government, if he might be allowed to state the problem quite crudely, that the result of their combined military and political examination of the issues at stake was that, if the German Government decided to take hostile steps against the Czechoslovak State, it would be impossible, in our present military situation, to prevent those steps from achieving immediate success.

Regarded purely as a military proposition, any re-establishment of the Czechoslovak State would have to wait the issue of a war in which we had been victorious. It might be necessary to wait a long time before such a conclusion had been reached, and it was perhaps impossible to exclude from our minds the question whether, even at the end of a victorious war, it would in fact be possible to re-establish the Czechoslovak State on its present basis. It therefore seemed to him absolutely essential and necessary for all of them to face this problem in a spirit of complete realism. In these circumstances, His Majesty's Government regarded it as essential that both Governments should agree that every effort should be made by Dr. Benes to reach a settlement of the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia in negotiations with representatives of that minority, and that both His Majesty's Government and the French Government should use all their influence, preferably jointly, to further such a settlement. He regarded it as essential that such a settlement should be reached in direct negotiations with Herr Henlein's party.

It was difficult to foresee how events would develop, but it seemed to His Majesty's Government that there should be two elements in the joint action which was proposed:—

In the first place, the German Government ought not to be encouraged to think that they could impose any settlement they would on Czechoslovakia by force or by threat of force. It was for this reason, among others, that the Prime Minister in his speech in the House of Commons on the 24th March spoke about it being well within the bounds of probability that other countries, not parties to the original dispute, would ultimately be involved in any war which might issue from it. His Majesty's Government would anticipate that it might be desirable at some stage for a direct approach to be made to the German Government on that subject and in that sense. It was not, however, in their mind to make any approach to the German Government at the present moment.

Secondly, it should be made very clear to the Czechoslovak Government and to Dr. Benes that they must seize this opportunity, which might be the last, to make a supreme effort to reach a settlement on this question. How

far distant and how difficult an agreement at the present moment might be was shown by a comparison of the outline of the proposed 'minorities' or 'nationalities' statute which the Czechoslovak Government had communicated to London and Paris on the one hand and on the other by the demands formulated in Herr Henlein's speech at Karlsbad. His Majesty's Government had not been able to give the proposed statute anything more than a preliminary study, but they doubted very much whether it did in fact go far enough to constitute an adequate basis for the compromise they were seeking.

It also seemed of great importance to His Majesty's Government that, while on our side we should do all we could to prevent Germany thinking that she could act as she wished, and at the same time bring pressure to bear on Dr. Benes with a view to reaching a real settlement of the minority problem, we must also exercise caution to see that we did not put ourselves in the position of being possibly embarrassed at a later stage by the consequences of our taking any responsibility for proposals made by Dr. Benes which we should not be able finally to support and render effective.

The British representative at Prague had recently had long conversations with Dr. Benes and the Foreign Minister. It was not necessary to describe at any length or in great detail the course of these conversations, but he would mention that Dr. Benes had made it clear that he had long held the view that it was impossible for Czechoslovakia to remain what he termed a national State. Dr. Benes appeared now to be thinking in terms of a State composed of different nationalities rather than a single State, including certain minorities.

Lord Halifax thought it might be possible to build something on such a conception. His Majesty's Government felt there was certain difficulty in pronouncing upon the intrinsic merits of any scheme which Dr. Benes might produce and might even put before them, but at the same time he doubted whether it would be possible, and it might not even be right, to avoid expressing our views, even if they were purely tentative, on such a scheme. In attempting to formulate our views he would suggest that two tests should be applied: (1) We should be guided by the intrinsic merits of the scheme, and (2) we should face fairly and squarely the disagreeable fact that what he would term the settlement value of the scheme must also be borne in mind.

His Majesty's Government would be grateful and glad to learn the views of the French Government on the points of view he had outlined above. In particular, they were anxious that the French Government should agree with His Majesty's Government to make a joint or concerted approach to the Czechoslovak Government at the earliest possible date in some such sense as His Majesty's Government had indicated. He would like to add that for this very reason he had been concerned to see from a telegram which had come into his hands in the last day or two, that there appeared to be some danger that the negotiations between Dr. Benes and Herr Henlein's representatives might be suspended until after the municipal and communal elections which take place in Czechoslovakia, that is to say, until next June. In the view of His Majesty's Government it would be in the highest degree unwise to allow

matters to rest where they were for so long a period at the mercy of unforeseen incidents which might arise. He hoped that the French Government would agree on the desirability of bringing pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government to continue their efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement with the Sudeten Germans, probably on a much broader basis than they had hitherto envisaged, and so avoid the very grave dangers which now confronted Europe.

M. Daladier said that he wished to approach the problem of Czechoslovakia in the same spirit as the British Ministers, ignoring ideological considerations and with a lively sense of the realities of the situation. He would remind the British Ministers that in the Anglo-French conversations in London in November 1937, M. Delbos, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, had been asked, during his forthcoming visit to Prague, to urge Dr. Benes to agree to further concessions to the German minority. After M. Delbos's visit the Czechoslovak Government announced certain concessions, and recently they had gone even further in a new plan, which had been communicated to the French Government, and also, he believed, to the British Government. He was of the opinion that Czechoslovakia had done more for the minorities than any other European State. He had himself visited Czechoslovakia several times. He had been to the Sudeten districts and everywhere he had seen German schools and German officials. If, therefore, Czechoslovakia was compared with other countries, it must be recognised that nowhere else had greater concessions been made to minorities. He agreed, however, that both Governments should make an effort to persuade Dr. Benes to go even further in his concessions to the German minority, but he could only agree on certain conditions. He was himself convinced that Herr Henlein was not, in fact, seeking any concessions, and that his real object was the destruction of the present Czechoslovak State. This, he thought, was clear from Herr Henlein's Karlsbad speech, as it had been reported in the press, whose character was violent and entirely negative. It was interesting to note that Sudeten circles had tried to create the impression that the published text was not accurate and that what Herr Henlein had really said would only be known in a fortnight. He thought that this clearly indicated the true character of the speech. He repeated that Herr Henlein's real object was the destruction of the Czechoslovak State. Dr. Benes, however, whose wisdom he would be the first to recognise, had nevertheless indicated that he was ready to continue negotiations. Lord Halifax, for his part, had said that his information indicated that Dr. Benes might be prepared to go much further in the direction of a State of nationalities. If Dr. Benes's views had been accurately reported, certainly the French Government would not wish to raise any objection to such a policy, and they would support everything which Dr. Benes could do in the hope of pacifying the European situation. But if the French Government were to agree to intervene yet again at Prague with a view to persuading the Czechoslovak Government to make further concessions to their German population, then he thought it was essential to say quite frankly that if such concessions were not accepted, then we should be prepared to support the

Czechoslovak Government and prevent the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Otherwise he feared that the proposed *démarche* in Prague could only be humiliating and even dangerous. He agreed with the British Government that our support for the Czechoslovak Government should, of course, be made dependent upon the latter adopting a reasonable policy, but at the same time it would, in his view, be dangerous to bring pressure to bear upon Dr. Benes, which might well have the effect of disquieting Czechoslovak public opinion, if we were determined not to accept the responsibilities implicit in the action we had taken.

M. Daladier considered, however, that it was not really at Prague that it was necessary to bring pressure to bear. He was convinced that the Czechoslovak Government would take whatever action we indicated to them. The danger, in his view, lay outside Czechoslovakia. The recent Sudeten Congress at Karlsbad and the agitation among Sudeten Germans illustrated only too clearly the dramatic situation of Europe. We should be blind if we did not see the realities of the present situation. We were confronted by German policy readily translated into action, designed to tear up treaties and destroy the equilibrium of Europe. In his view, the ambitions of Napoleon were far inferior to the present aims of the German Reich. One had only to consider recent events. First, there had been the occupation of the Rhineland. On this occasion France had taken no action. He realised that it was not usual to criticise the action taken by a previous Government, but he wished to state quite frankly that if he himself had been in power at that time he would have opposed the German occupation of the Rhineland, by force, if necessary. Secondly, there had been the question of Austria. We had talked a great deal of the necessity of maintaining the independence of Austria, but nothing had been done. He realised that there had been an obvious objection to any action. The Austrians were of German race, and there had been a movement in favour of the 'Anschluss' in Austria, nevertheless prepared by Nazi propaganda. To sum up, the independence of Austria had been destroyed, and all we had done was to offer our condolences. To-day we were faced with the question of Czechoslovakia. To-morrow we might be faced with that of Roumania. King Carol had recently arrested M. Codreanu, chief of the Roumanian Iron Guard, and documents had been found showing that the action of the Iron Guard had been carefully co-ordinated with the Nazi party in Germany, with a view to introducing a form of Nazi rule in Roumania. He thought it was clear that, if and when Germany had secured the petrol and wheat resources of Roumania, she would then turn against the Western Powers, and it would be our own blindness which would have provided Germany with the very supplies she required for the long war which she admitted she was not now in a position to wage.

M. Daladier agreed that every effort should be made to avoid war, but he could only profess his profound conviction that, confronted as we were with such a situation, war could only be avoided if Great Britain and France made their determination quite clear to maintain the peace of Europe by respecting the liberties and the rights of independent peoples. If we were to act accord-

ingly and show that we were ready to take action to save the independence of Czechoslovakia, if need arose after she had made such concessions as we considered necessary to the German minority, then he felt an improvement would take place in the European situation. Only then could we expect to see Yugoslavia, over whose policy Great Britain could exercise great influence, Roumania and perhaps even Poland, change their present attitude and give us their support in the cause of peace. If, however, we were once again to capitulate when faced by another threat, we should then have prepared the way for the very war we wished to avoid.

He realised that the British Ministers had raised objections concerning the military situation. They had suggested that we were powerless to act effectively in support of Czechoslovakia, and that it would, therefore, be useless to make any general declaration. If he felt that this was really the case, that we were in fact powerless to act, then he would agree that the only course was to resign ourselves to the inevitable. But he could not agree to such a proposition. In his view the Czechoslovak army was by no means to be despised. On a peace footing, it numbered 180,000 men, and on mobilisation it could be enlarged to 500,000 men, well trained, well equipped, and animated by a public spirit. He admitted that the Czech fortification system could now be turned as a result of the 'Anschluss,' but it should not be impossible for Czechoslovakia so to effect a redistribution of her means of defence as to improve her present situation. If, therefore, we took action in the sense he had suggested, then he felt convinced that Roumania, Yugoslavia, and perhaps even Poland, would change their views on the European situation and reaffirm their old friendships. This would, after all, be in their own interests, since he could not believe that these countries could suppose that Germany would respect their independence once she had achieved her other aims. In his view the military situation was really determined by the political situation, and could be decided by the determination shown by statesmen.

He felt it would be wrong to believe that Germany was now in a position to meet every kind of military requirement. So far as France was concerned, she had her obligations which were contained in her treaty with Czechoslovakia, to whom she had promised her support. This treaty had been signed, not by a chauvinist, but by M. Aristide Briand, whose whole life-work had been devoted to the pacification of Europe. France regarded this treaty as vital, and considered that it must be respected and executed. This would be done by concentrating against France the main strength of the German army in case of war, and this he considered was a form of assistance which was by no means negligible. He would refer to Russia, since Russia had been mentioned by Lord Halifax. He agreed that Russia must have suffered from the brutal and summary executions which had taken place in the ranks of the Higher Command of the Army. On the other hand, Russia still possessed the strongest air force in Europe, comprising 5,000 aeroplanes. Her potential war resources were extremely great and could easily be brought into play, since the Russian workers were now organised under the system



known as 'Stakhanovism,' which had been shown to produce impressive results. He, therefore, believed that if Great Britain and France were now to declare that they would bring pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government with a view to securing reasonable concessions for the German minority, at the same time declaring that they could not permit the destruction of the Czechoslovak State, then the peace of Europe might be saved.

Mr. Chamberlain said he had listened with great attention to M. Daladier's remarks. This subject was perhaps the most important with which they had to deal. M. Daladier had begun by saying that the Czechoslovak Government had made greater concessions to its minorities than had any other Government in Europe. He did not himself know enough about the details to express any opinion on this, but he was, of course, prepared to believe that this was in fact the case. He had, however, been told by friends of his who had recently visited Czechoslovakia, that the Czechoslovak Government had promised rather more than they had, in fact, carried out. He had observed that, however violent Herr Henlein's Karlsbad speech had been, he had not, in fact, demanded the 'Anschluss' with Germany. He had been told by a friend, who had recently come to see him and who had just spent some time in the Sudeten districts, talking to the villagers and representative local Germans, such as mayors and innkeepers, that all the Sudetens he had met had said definitely that they wanted the 'Anschluss' with Germany. If this friend's impression was correct, then Herr Henlein was not at present putting forward his full demands on the lines which his own followers would seem to desire, and which had no doubt been put into their heads by what they had just seen happening in Austria. He wished M. Daladier to understand quite clearly that he was not in any way attempting to justify the policy or activities of the Sudeten Germans, nor of Germany herself. But if we were to understand the position correctly, we must try to imagine how things appear to the other side. We were faced with a practical problem, that of trying to save something of Czechoslovakia, and in particular to save the existence of the Czechoslovak State. We must try to picture to ourselves what was the policy of those who were threatening the independence of Czechoslovakia, if, indeed, they did so intend to threaten it.

A large part of what M. Daladier had just said had been founded on his view of German aims and ambitions. Mr. Chamberlain would return to that question presently, but for the moment he preferred to consider the problem he had just stated, that of trying to save the existence of the Czechoslovak State. For this purpose there were two things that had to be borne in mind. In the first place, if his information was correct, Germany had it in her power to impose upon Czechoslovakia such a degree of economic pressure as would, in fact, be irresistible. If Germany adopted this course, no *casus belli* would then arise under the terms of the Franco-Czechoslovak treaty, and Germany would be able to accomplish everything she required without moving a single soldier. If this view was correct, we were confronted with a very formidable situation. He would, however, leave that on one side for the moment and go on to consider the proposition put forward by M. Daladier.

He understood that M. Daladier contemplated doing everything possible in order to avoid war and that he was prepared to go so far as to urge Dr. Benes to make further efforts to meet the reasonable demands of the Sudeten Germans. But M. Daladier had made the reservation that, in his opinion, we could not honourably urge Dr. Benes to accept demands, some of which might well threaten the whole structure of the Czechoslovak State. He understood M. Daladier to have gone on to suggest that, while representations should be made to Dr. Benes with this reservation in mind, a declaration should also be made to the German Government, making it quite clear that there was a point beyond which they could not go with impunity. Mr. Chamberlain would like to say that, so far as representations to Dr. Benes were concerned, he would agree generally with M. Daladier. He thought we could ask Dr. Benes to go as far as he possibly could towards a settlement of the Sudeten question, and thus avoid putting her allies in a position which, to say the least, must cause them intense anxiety. We would not, in our representations at Prague, press Dr. Benes to accept terms which, in effect, meant the destruction of his country. Mr. Chamberlain would propose to tell Dr. Benes plainly what he could expect from us and what he could not expect. He thought it would be the worst possible service to Dr. Benes at this juncture to lead him to suppose that he could count on greater support from us, in the event of certain circumstances arising, than would, in fact, be the case, and so disappoint him at a later stage. In Mr. Chamberlain's view we should indicate plainly to Dr. Benes the limits within which he could count upon us.

If he had understood M. Daladier correctly, the latter was of the opinion that, if, at this juncture, we were to speak to the German Government with sufficient firmness, then there would be no war, for either Germany would not be able or would not care to brave the united forces of France, Great Britain and Czechoslovakia, and such assistance as might be obtainable from outside sources. He considered that this was what the Americans in their card games called bluff. It amounted to advancing a certain declaration in the hope that that declaration would prevent the events we did not wish to occur. But it was not a certainty that such action would be successful. It might be true that the chances against war were 100-1, but so long as that one chance existed, we must consider carefully what our attitude must be, and how we should be prepared to act in the event of war. He himself had considerable sympathy with the views which M. Daladier had expressed, and he had even asked himself where the present course of events was likely to stop. He had considered whether there must not be some moment at which it was necessary to put down one's foot and take all risks to prevent a further deterioration in the situation. With the problem of Czechoslovakia especially in his mind, he had thought long and anxiously whether we could make the sort of declaration which M. Daladier had in mind. But when he had examined the military situation, he had been assailed by serious doubts. If a war arose after such a declaration, he himself could not see any possibility of saving Czechoslovakia, of avoiding the destruction of that country, or of

its being overrun by the aggressor. The Czech army was no doubt a good one, as M. Daladier had indicated, but the latter had admitted that Czechoslovakia's fortifications had been turned as a result of the 'Anschluss'. One had only to look at the map. Czechoslovakia was surrounded by German territory on three sides. He could not help thinking of the extreme rapidity and the efficient organisation with which 3,000 armed men had been landed by Germany near Vienna in half an hour. In such circumstances, how would it be possible to save Czechoslovakia? In such a situation, were we to say to Germany that we would not tolerate her continued progress in Europe and that the moment had come to call a halt; and that, if Germany were to take certain steps, we would then declare war? We would then be casting the die and deciding that, in our view, this was, from the military point of view, the opportune moment to declare war on Germany with the object of bringing about her defeat. When listening to M. Daladier, he had himself felt corresponding emotions. It made his blood boil to see Germany getting away with it time after time and increasing her domination over free peoples. But such sentimental considerations were dangerous, and he must remember, as M. Daladier would also have to remember, the forces with which we were playing. Whatever the odds might be in favour of peace or war, it was not money but men with which we were gambling, and he could not lightly enter into a conflict which might mean such frightful results for innumerable families, men, women and children, of our own race. We must therefore consider with the greatest care whether, if the attitude he had just outlined towards Germany were adopted, we—and in this connexion he was thinking of His Majesty's Government and the French Government, since we could not count on any outside support—were sufficiently powerful to make victory certain. Frankly, he did not think we were. He fully agreed with the remarks which M. Daladier had made yesterday on the power of the defensive, and he thought that a time would come when a gamble on the issue of peace or war might be contemplated with less anxiety than at present. At this moment he was certain public opinion in Great Britain would not allow His Majesty's Government to take such a risk, and it was no use for this Government, or indeed for any other Government, to go beyond its public opinion with the possible effect of bringing destruction to brave people. Great though his sympathy was for the views expressed by M. Daladier, his cool judgment told him that the moment had not come when it was safe to adopt such an attitude.

Mr. Chamberlain had asked himself whether the picture was really so black as M. Daladier had painted it. For his part he doubted very much whether Herr Hitler really desired to destroy the Czechoslovak State or rather a Czechoslovak State. He doubted whether at the present moment he wished to bring about the 'Anschluss' of the Sudeten districts with Germany, and he thought that the reason why Herr Henlein had not in his speech demanded this 'Anschluss', which was desired by his own followers, was that he had received advice from Berlin not to do so. He agreed, however, that this might only mean a temporary suspension, and that a demand for the 'Anschluss'

might reappear in the future. He thought, however, that it should be possible for Dr. Benes to put forward such proposals which, although they would alter the character of the Czechoslovak State, as we had known it hitherto, would not bring about its destruction. If Germany did decide to destroy Czechoslovakia, he did not see how this could be prevented. But, for his part, he did not believe that such a decision had been reached.

Mr. Chamberlain agreed that meanwhile we must watch very carefully what was going on in other States bordering upon Czechoslovakia; in particular, Roumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland. He suggested the wisdom of trying to put oneself into the skin of one's opponent, and he wondered if we need necessarily read into what M. Daladier had said about the discovery of German intrigues in Roumania a definite determination on the part of Germany to obtain control in that country. He would suggest that this might merely represent preparations against the encirclement which Germany undoubtedly thought she had to guard against and against which she required to take every possible precaution. His Majesty's Government had had to take into account similar considerations before embarking upon their conversations with the Italian Government. There had been certain hostile Italian activities, of which His Majesty's Government were very well aware, but they considered that these activities might well be the Italian response to suspicions regarding the future intentions of Great Britain, rather than a definite indication of aggressive intentions on the part of Italy towards Great Britain and British interests. He claimed that the view of His Majesty's Government had been justified by the results of the conversations. He agreed that it was Germany and not Italy which now had to be considered, but in this case, also, he thought that a less menacing interpretation might be placed upon the facts than that which M. Daladier had suggested. He thought it important not to forget the great improvement which had taken place in the relations between Great Britain and Italy, and if we played our cards carefully and wisely he thought we might still do a great deal to keep the States of Central Europe and the Balkans out of the German orbit and to exercise the deterrent influence on Germany which we all considered to be necessary.

In conclusion, Mr. Chamberlain had never excluded the possibility, for no one in his position could do so, that at some time we might be compelled to go to war. Circumstances might arise in which things more precious would be at stake than wealth, or life, or property; but he could only agree to go to war in the very last resort and could not envisage such a possibility as something to be undertaken lightly. He had himself seen war and had seen how impossible it was for anyone engaging in any war like the last war to come out of it stronger or happier. Therefore only dire necessity would ever persuade him to wage a preventive war. He was against preventive war. But however dangerous the present situation might be, he did not think that we should lose heart or regard it as impossible to improve the situation in the next few years without running the frightful risks of the course which M. Daladier had urged should be adopted.

M. Bonnet, without wishing to reply to Mr. Chamberlain, wished to return

to the consideration of immediate realities. He thought that very soon, in the weeks ahead of us, perhaps within the next month, we might probably be faced with the Czechoslovak problem as a result of an act of force on the part of Germany. The telegrams which the Quai d'Orsay had received from Berlin were not in entire agreement with the views expressed by Mr. Chamberlain. On the contrary, there were indications of a strong tendency on the part of such prominent German leaders as Herr Hess, Field-Marshal Göring and Dr. Goebbels, not to wait any longer to profit from the present situation and what they regarded as the weakness of the Western Powers, and to confront the Czechoslovak Government with conditions similar to those which had preceded the disappearance of Austria. It was not, therefore, correct to say that Herr Hitler and his immediate entourage favoured the conservation of a Czechoslovakia transformed into a neutral State on a federal basis. This might be the view of the German Foreign Office, but it was certainly not the view held by those close to the Führer. They had noted the success with which the swift use of force had met in the occupation of the Rhineland and in Austria. In their view it was simply a question of removing Czechoslovakia from the map of Europe: the German parts of Bohemia would go to the Reich and Teschen to Poland. Slovakia would be attached to Hungary with some degree of autonomy. The Czechs would constitute a small State which would necessarily be in the German orbit. He must repeat that he thought we should be confronted with some such situation in the near future. It would be dangerous not to reflect on this situation in advance, before a further violation of treaties on the part of Germany.

On this hypothesis what line would the French Government adopt? M. Daladier had explained that France would scrupulously respect her obligations, which were contained in the 1935 treaty. France must respect her signature and Great Britain, whose school-children were taught the importance of honouring their promises, would readily understand the attitude of France.

Lord Halifax had asked earlier in the conversations how efficacious were the measures which the French Government could take to oppose German action. Obviously their efficacy would be partly dependent upon the support which might be forthcoming from His Majesty's Government. If France remained alone, the situation must be uncertain; but if solidarity existed between France and Great Britain they could ensure the success of their views. On any hypothesis such solidarity between the two Governments should be reached in advance. Mr. Chamberlain had explained with impressive arguments the difficulties of defending Czechoslovakia. But the problem would remain the same. After we had made our *démarche* in Prague and after the Czechoslovak Government had agreed to make further concessions, if these were rejected and even at this stage there were no solidarity between the French and British Governments in support of Czechoslovakia, then he was convinced that Germany would be in a position to remove Czechoslovakia from the map of Europe, which was obviously a solution she would prefer to the half-way solution which had been mentioned, and which



Germany would have to accept if the views of the French Government and the British Government were completely at one. Therefore, a joint firm attitude, accompanied by the determination not to depart from such an attitude in any circumstances, seemed absolutely necessary under any hypothesis, whether on the French hypothesis that France was compelled to respect her obligations and honour her signature, or on the British hypothesis regarding the probable course of events which Mr. Chamberlain had explained. His view was that we could only succeed if we agreed in advance upon our policy in the face of German intentions, which were publicly announced to every traveller who passed through that country.

(M. Bonnet left the meeting at 12.30 p.m.)

Lord Halifax, in reply to M. Bonnet's observations, was sure that the British Government agreed with the sentiments expressed by M. Bonnet, as to the importance of obtaining, so far as this was possible, such a close understanding of each other's minds as would enable us to act in future with the greatest possible degree of solidarity between us. As he saw it, the great difference between the two points of view was this: M. Daladier had said, and M. Bonnet had suggested the same thing, that the military situation was dependent upon the political situation. On the British side, the problem was viewed from another angle, and the political situation was considered to be dependent upon the military situation. The British Ministers were disposed to the view that diplomatic efforts were most likely to be useful, and that it would be necessary to rely particularly upon these. It would not be safe to rely on the use of force, as Mr. Chamberlain had explained. It would represent a gamble, and he thought Mr. Chamberlain had been abundantly right when he said that this was a course which he thought this country would find herself unable to adopt.

If at this stage we agreed together to make the fullest use of diplomatic means, he thought it would certainly be desirable and, indeed, in his view essential, for the two Governments to join in making the strongest possible representations to the Czechoslovak Government. He would suggest that both the French Government and His Majesty's Government should now consider whether, if a point were reached at which private information was received from Dr. Benes that he might be prepared to consider such and such a solution which would go a long way to remove the dangers of the present situation, it might not then be possible to approach the German Government through diplomatic channels, and say to them that it had occurred to us that it might be possible to arrive at an agreement on the Sudeten question on the lines of such and such a formula as suggested by Dr. Benes. If the German Government would agree, this would then be a basis on which His Majesty's Government and the French Government could bring pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government to accept such a solution. He was not certain whether it would, in fact, be prudent to act on such lines, but he thought the course he had suggested merited consideration.

There was, of course, a great deal that we could do in various directions

with regard to the countries in Central Europe and the Balkans bordering upon Czechoslovakia. His Majesty's Government already had this question in mind, and they would not be slow to seize any opportunity offered to encourage the feelings of considerable anxiety in these countries which, according to their information, had been generated by recent events in Austria, and to reinforce their desire to find means to strengthen themselves in view of those very events. He thought it should be possible for our two countries, not necessarily acting on the same lines since the ways in which they might help necessarily varied, to contribute to stabilising the scales in those parts of Europe.

M. Daladier fully understood and, in fact, shared the sentiments expressed by Mr. Chamberlain in condemning war. For his part, he was convinced that we ought all to endeavour to avoid war, which we condemned as something monstrous. He had gone through the last war for four years as a combatant, and had served as an infantryman from the Somme to Alsace. He had seen the destruction of the ten richest provinces of his country. He had seen his best friends killed around him, and after such an experience one's only thought could be to do everything possible to avoid a repetition of such atrocities. Consequently, he could not allow it to be supposed that he was in favour of a preventive war, the very idea of which he regarded as criminal.

But he was in a position in which he had to meet obligations which were of a purely defensive character, and respect the terms of a treaty which menaced no one, and which only protected an independent people against unprovoked aggression. This was the situation as regards Czechoslovakia, and the relations between France and Czechoslovakia. The problem was how to avoid war. He could not help thinking that if the common policy of France and Great Britain was inspired by sentiments of weakness, if we submitted on every occasion before violent measures and the use of force, the only result would be to precipitate renewed violence and ensure further success for the use of forceful methods. If, on the other hand, our general policy, however wise and pacific, were also inspired by firmness, and this were generally known and appreciated, then he thought a European war might be avoided. Otherwise we should only be advancing towards the troubles we feared. He thought that the policy we had advocated could only have fortunate results throughout Europe, and especially at Berlin. Mr. Chamberlain had suggested that this was a policy of bluff. M. Daladier did not intend any bluff. German policy, on the other hand, was one of bluff, or had certainly been so in the past. When Herr Hitler had ordered the reoccupation of the Rhineland, this policy had been opposed by the German Higher Command, who feared its possible consequences. He had himself been informed by two German generals that they had given their advice against this operation, but Herr Hitler had bluffed and had reoccupied the Rhineland. He had used this method and had succeeded. Was there any reason why he should cease to use such methods if we left him an open road and so ensured his success? As regards the suggestion of encirclement, he did not himself believe that Germany was really worried about encirclement. After all, who was

encircling Germany? In the west she had reoccupied the Rhineland. She had recently occupied Austria. She had forged the Rome-Berlin axis and established satisfactory relations with Poland. She was now considering the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and if she succeeded in this, she would then set about realising the dream of William II of a Mitteleuropa under German dominance. Where was there any question of encirclement in this? He could only see in all this a very disturbing manifestation of the dynamic force of modern Germany. We were at present still able to place obstacles in her path, but if we failed to do so now, we should then, in his view, make a European war inevitable in the near future, and he was afraid that we should certainly not win such a war, for once Germany had at her disposal all the resources of Central and Eastern Europe, how could any effective military resistance be opposed to her? In such conditions the German Empire would be inevitably stronger than that of Napoleon.

It had been suggested that efforts should be made to induce the Government at Prague to make further concessions to the Sudeten Germans. He agreed to such a course, but if the result of such representations would only be that after such concessions had been offered the road would be open to Germany, who would be given a free hand to act as she wished, then we should only have precipitated a catastrophe instead of preventing it. He regretted that he must say that the French Government could not agree that German policy should be allowed to continue to develop freely. It was his belief that, if no warning were given to the effect that justice and the public law of Europe must be respected and German policy continued to develop on its present lines, we should soon be faced with even greater dangers. He feared that time was not on our side, but rather against us, if we allowed Germany to achieve a new success every month or every quarter, increasing her material strength and her political influence with every successful advance. If this continued, countries which were now hesitating would feel compelled to submit to the hegemony of Germany and then, as we had been warned in 'Mein Kampf', Germany would turn to the west. He feared that, if the opposite thesis to that which he had summarised was approved, if there were no signs of a determined policy and a common agreement between His Majesty's Government and the French Government, we should then have decided the fate of Europe, and he could only regard the future with the greatest pessimism.

(The meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m.)

#### FOURTH MEETING, April 29, 2.45 p.m.

##### 7. STAFF CONVERSATIONS (*continued*)

Mr. Chamberlain said that before returning to the subject under discussion at the morning's meeting, there was one matter which he would like to mention. He had had an opportunity during luncheon of exchanging a few words with M. Daladier regarding naval conversations. He had gathered that his French friends attached more importance to this question than he had hitherto appreciated. He had already explained that any objections on his

part were based on expediency, and not on principle, and if the present position was that the French Ministers would find it more agreeable to arrive at some more positive conclusion than had been agreed at yesterday's meeting, he would be prepared to accept what M. Bonnet had proposed, namely, that both Governments were agreed in principle to naval conversations being held, but that these should only be taken up as soon as opportunity offered. For example, he would suggest after Herr Hitler's visit to Rome.

M. Daladier expressed himself in agreement with this suggestion, which corresponded with the views of the French Ministers.

#### 4. CZECHOSLOVAKIA (*continued*)

Lord Halifax said that both sides had had an opportunity of considering further what had passed at this morning's meeting. He thought that a good deal of what had been said, both by M. Bonnet towards the end of the morning's meeting and by M. Daladier at an earlier stage, did involve the suggestion that at some point or other His Majesty's Government should combine any advice which, in conjunction with the French Government, they might give to Dr. Benes, with a guarantee to Dr. Benes that if he accepted our advice and acted upon it, he could then count upon full British support if the German Government rejected his proposals and Czechoslovakia were a victim of German aggression. He was fully sensible of the force of what M. Daladier had said in the morning regarding the importance of doing everything we could to check Germany in her process of absorption, and to prevent the establishment of a German hegemony in Europe as a result of the absorption of one unit after another. He fully realised the exact implications of what M. Daladier had said, but he could only remind him that for the reasons already given by Mr. Chamberlain it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to contemplate going any further in the way of commitments than had been indicated in the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons on the 24th March. A further consideration which had not been mentioned, but which would no doubt be present in the minds of the French Ministers, was that whatever might be the attitude of this country—and it was at present as the Prime Minister had described it—His Majesty's Government also had to take into account the attitude of the Dominions on a question of this kind in which they might well become involved as a consequence of whatever decision was taken now. He could, therefore, only repeat the statement made by Mr. Chamberlain at the morning meeting regarding the impossibility of making any further commitments.

This being the case, they had been asking themselves what further help they were in a position to give with a view to relieving the common anxieties felt by the French Government and also by His Majesty's Government. From their point of view they had re-examined the possibility, which had already been suggested, of making some approach both to Prague and also to Berlin. When discussing at the morning session the question of approaching Prague, M. Daladier had said, very properly, that it was not only a question of Prague, and that it was not less important also to take steps else-

where. It was therefore for consideration whether a useful purpose might be served if we also made an approach to Berlin, and what character such an approach should take if it were decided upon. It was possible that the German Government might take the line that the Sudeten question was their concern and not the concern of His Majesty's Government or of the French Government. We should, however, then be able to reply that Field-Marshal Göring had given His Majesty's Government certain assurances in respect of Czechoslovakia after the German absorption of Austria. Although it was true that Great Britain was not directly interested in the lot of the Sudeten Germans, she was closely interested in the peace of Europe, and it could be pointed out to the German Government that His Majesty's Government had made it plain to them that if the problems of Czechoslovakia were handled unwisely, this might lead to a European war.

The British Ministers had been wondering whether it would be wise to make an approach to Berlin in some such sense; and, if it were considered wise to act on these lines, which of two alternative courses should be adopted. The first alternative would be to approach Dr. Benes in the first place, and find out from him the utmost concessions which he was prepared to make. An approach could then be made to Berlin, in which His Majesty's Government would inform the German Government of the measures which they thought Dr. Benes might be willing to take if he were satisfied that on such lines a settlement could be reached which might be expected to endure. They would then be able to judge from the reactions to this approach what were the real intentions of Germany. Alternatively, it might be considered better to approach Berlin in the first place and say to the German Government that they had on many occasions represented that the treatment of the Sudeten Germans by the Czechoslovak Government was a matter of the gravest anxiety for them. We could say that we were also concerned over this problem in so far as we wished to see it handled in such a way as would not involve the possibility of war. We could ask the German Government to suggest what they considered to be the best means of relieving these anxieties, and of remedying what they alleged to be maltreatment of their people in Czechoslovakia. He had a feeling that German claims were rather like mushrooms, in that they grew in the dark, and if we could succeed in bringing them into the open, though there might be dangers and disadvantages in so doing, we should at least know where we were; and we should know what claims were really being made, and be on firmer ground on which to decide what action should be taken. If some such methods were considered useful, His Majesty's Government might go on to suggest to the German Government that they should look at the position in the following light. It was possible that if His Majesty's Government could persuade Dr. Benes to move so far in the direction of further concessions, the German Government might obtain 60 per cent. or 70 per cent. of their complete demands by pacific methods. If, however, they rejected such a compromise and insisted on the full 100 per cent. of their demands, then there was the gravest risk that they could only achieve their object by war, and in that event the position of the



British Government had been quite clearly defined for all to read by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on the 24th March. He felt that something on the above lines offered the best solution, and, in fact, the only compromise between M. Daladier's very natural request for a firm British commitment, which it was, however, quite impossible for His Majesty's Government to give, and the attitude of His Majesty's Government having regard to public opinion in this country and in other parts of the Empire.

M. Bonnet said that there was one question he wished to ask. If we accepted as a hypothesis that such a *démarche* were made in Prague and that the Czechoslovak Government agreed to offer further concessions, at that moment and under those particular circumstances would the British Government then be prepared to affirm its solidarity with the French Government with a view to the maintenance of a settlement on the lines agreed upon with Dr. Benes? He felt it was essential that when such a point had been reached we should no longer remain in the present state of uncertainty.

Lord Halifax said that, if he had rightly understood M. Bonnet, the latter had asked whether, after Dr. Benes had informed His Majesty's Government of the concessions which he was prepared to make, and the latter had found them reasonable, His Majesty's Government would then be prepared, in the event of the rejection of these concessions by Germany and of a German attack on Czechoslovakia to accept an obligation to defend Czechoslovakia against the results of such German aggression. If this was M. Bonnet's question, he could only answer that, for the reasons already given, it would be impossible to accept such a commitment.

He thought, however, that it was perhaps worth mentioning at this stage that in the view of His Majesty's Government it would be going a long way if, as he had suggested, we were to repeat direct to Herr Hitler the words which Mr. Chamberlain had already pronounced in the House of Commons regarding the attitude of this country in certain eventualities. He felt there was a great difference between repeating such words direct to the German Government and so giving it a particular application, and pronouncing them in the House of Commons primarily for our own people, even if the German Government naturally knew of them.

M. Daladier wished to recall exactly what the position of the French Government was, and to make certain concrete proposals. They considered that solidarity should be established between France and Great Britain and any other countries which were ready to join them, and we should then pursue a policy aimed at reconciliation in Czechoslovakia. It was, of course, legitimate—as the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax had suggested—first to inform ourselves and find out how far Dr. Benes's proposals were calculated to bring about a degree of appeasement desired on both sides in Czechoslovakia. If, however, the Czechoslovak Government were ready to make concessions on a reasonable scale, then he felt it was essential, as a minimum, to obtain assurances from Berlin that Germany would not resort to arms with a view to solving this question. She might be reminded of Field-Marshal Göring's assurances to the British Ambassador in Berlin that Germany had

no intention of resorting to force in this connexion. He did not think there was anything in such an approach of a nature to arouse German susceptibilities. But it should be clearly realised that if, after such *démarches* had been made at Berlin and Prague, and in spite of the assurances given by Field-Marshal Göring, which he would probably be prepared to renew, Germany nevertheless resorted to force to settle the Sudeten question, then the British and French Governments would have to draw the obvious conclusions. He had framed concrete suggestions on these lines with a view, as Lord Halifax had suggested, to preventing the German mushroom growing too rapidly. There was nothing in what he had suggested to offend any Government, particularly the German Government, if their policy was loyal and sincere and they really wished to maintain the peace of Europe. He suggested that it might be possible to agree on action on these lines, and he added that the suggestions already put forward by Lord Halifax were in many respects calculated to give satisfaction to the French Government.

Mr. Chamberlain realised that there was naturally some difficulty in reaching agreement on this question, but he was not quite clear as to the precise form of the *démarche* suggested by M. Daladier. If he had understood him aright, he had seemed to commit both the British and French Governments to a particular Czechoslovak plan of concessions which might not prove acceptable to the German Government. If we were then to ask the German Government for an assurance that they would not resort to force, it was doubtful whether we should get such an assurance in the form we required. Supposing, however, that the German Government did, for the time being, accept the Czechoslovak proposals, although they did not think that they were in every way satisfactory, it would be only too easy for them at a later stage to stir up disturbances in the Sudeten areas and then intervene, saying, as they had done in the case of Austria, that they had no intention of using force, but had been compelled to take action in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. He was therefore a little uncomfortable of [*sic*] accepting M. Daladier's proposal at this stage without trying to obtain first from Germany some indication of what the German Government would be prepared to accept. If therefore an approach to the German Government by His Majesty's Government was desired by the French Government, His Majesty's Government would prefer to make such an approach simultaneously with their representations at Prague. His Majesty's Government would then be in a position to say that they, for their part, were doing their best to bring about a peaceful solution by representing to Dr. Benes the necessity of his contributing to such a solution. The British Government could then add that it took two to reach an agreement and ask the German Government what their position was. We would be able to suggest to them that, in view of the representations we had made in Prague, there was no need for Germany to take any hasty action, and we should then try to ascertain from the German Government what was their idea of a peaceful settlement. The answer of the German Government might be that they required what Herr Henlein had demanded in his Karlsbad speech. We might then suggest that in our view

certain of these demands might be obtained, but that we regarded other demands as being unreasonable. If then the German Government refused to move from their position, His Majesty's Government could then say that they had done their best, and if, in spite of the representations they had made to the German Government, the latter nevertheless insisted on having recourse to force, they must realise what the dangers were. It must be clear to them that the French Government were bound by their treaty obligations to support Czechoslovakia, and the German Government must realise that His Majesty's Government had not said that they would also<sup>6</sup> come in, too. At this point a communication would be made to the German Government on the lines of the speech he had made in the House of Commons on the 24th March, 1938. He would like to know whether his French friends would regard the course of action he had just outlined as a possible line of approach. M. Daladier said he would like to examine this suggestion rather more closely with his colleagues of the French delegation, but at first sight it seemed to him to mark a rapprochement between the British and French views. It was clear to him that there was no difference of view as regards our general ideas and the objects we both had in mind. The differences had only arisen in regard to the means by which these objects could be achieved. These differences arose from the difference in the circumstances of the two countries. (The meeting was then adjourned for a few minutes.)

On the resumption of the conversations, M. Bonnet said that, in order to avoid confusion, he had recapitulated in a short note his understanding of the proposals which the Prime Minister had put forward.

The conclusion reached, after some discussion, was that both Governments were agreed that there should be a *démarche* by His Majesty's Government alone in Berlin. They would explain to the German Government that they were doing their best to find a peaceful solution of the Sudeten difficulty and had asked Dr. Benes to make his contribution, but it took two to reach an agreement, and they therefore wished to know what was the position of the German Government. They wished to impress on the German Government that, in the meantime, and in view of their intervention at Prague, there was no need, nor indeed any reason, for action on the part of the German Government. Simultaneously, a *démarche* would be made at Prague by both the French and the British Governments to secure the maximum concessions from Dr. Benes. If, however, a peaceful solution were not reached by this means, His Majesty's Government would then say to the German Government that they had done everything they could; if, in spite of this, the German Government intended to resort to force, they would be doing so in full knowledge of the dangers of which they were aware, namely, that France would be compelled to intervene by virtue of her obligations, and that His Majesty's Government could not guarantee that they would

<sup>6</sup> The word 'also' is pencilled through on the copy of the text from which this document is printed. It is likely that owing to an error in transcription the word 'not' has been omitted from the text.

not do the same. In this connexion His Majesty's Government would make use of the phrases used by Mr. Chamberlain in his speech in the House of Commons on the 24th March, 1938.

5. THE PROBLEM OF CENTRAL EUROPE, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ROUMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA.

M. Daladier said he had already informed Mr. Chamberlain that, so far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, the French Government were prepared to grant her the important economic advantages which they had previously granted to Austria as regards the system of exports and the exchange of goods. So far as Roumania and Yugoslavia were concerned, and these considerations would apply also to Czechoslovakia, he considered that it was certainly the case that if the Western Powers could give any assistance of an economic nature this would help towards European appeasement. These questions, however, were very complex and difficult, and if they were to be examined properly, it would be necessary to go into great detail. He would therefore suggest that this meeting should agree upon the principle of according such assistance as might be possible, but should confide to experts, appointed by the two Governments, the task of recommending what practical steps could be taken to grant economic assistance to these Central European States.

Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that this question had been examined on the British side, and their examination had shown that there were very great difficulties in the way, into which he need not, however, enter at this meeting. He agreed that both the French and British Governments should do all they could to increase their trade with the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. He was therefore prepared to fall in with M. Daladier's proposal that this matter should be further discussed in detail by experts, by whom he supposed the commercial attachés were meant.

The French Ministers agreed.

6. ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS

Lord Halifax said he would not have a great deal to say on this question. The French Government were aware how matters stood up to the time of the interview between the British Ambassador in Berlin and Herr Hitler on the 3rd March, 1938. At that interview, as we had already informed the French Government, we had instructed His Majesty's Ambassador to take soundings from Herr Hitler on the colonial question. Herr Hitler had promised to send a written answer in due course, and we were awaiting that answer. Meanwhile, Sir N. Henderson had been instructed that he should not himself reopen conversations at present, and there seemed, indeed, to be very little scope at present for reopening them. But he had said to Sir N. Henderson that he did not wish the door to be closed in case opportunity offered, and we could take advantage of the door being still open. At to-day's conversations they had envisaged one particular direction in which His Majesty's Government might have to enter into discussions with the German

Government. If discussions went well in this connexion they might well be made more general in character with a view to arriving at a *détente*. In that case we should, of course, inform the French Government of the position and secure their assent to whatever we considered it would be wise to do so [*sic*] in such circumstances. But for the moment he had nothing concrete to propose.

The French Ministers declared themselves in agreement.

#### 7. STAFF CONVERSATIONS (*continued*)

Lord Halifax said that the French Ministers would remember that he had communicated to them at the first day's meeting a copy of a telegram (Annex III) which he had intended to send to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Berlin and Rome instructing them to make a communication to the German and Italian Governments on the question of staff conversations. He had thought this question over again, and he understood that some doubts had been expressed informally on the French side regarding the expediency of such action. He had been impressed by this view, and he had decided not to send the proposed telegram to Berlin or Rome. He thought it would be easier if, in the normal way of business, he asked the Italian Ambassador and the German Chargé d'Affaires to call at the Foreign Office to inform him that, in view of certain wild reports which had appeared in the press, he would like to say that, so far as staff conversations were concerned, it had been agreed to continue these conversations on the same basis as had been laid down in the agreement of March 1936. He would add that there need therefore be no cause for anxiety.

The French Ministers expressed their agreement.

#### COMMUNIQUE

The French and British Ministers agreed on the terms of the final communiqué to be issued to the press (Annex VI).

The proceedings were then closed at 4.45 p.m.

#### ANNEX I

##### ANGLO-FRENCH CONVERSATIONS: AGENDA

1. Anglo-Italian (Franco-Italian) relations.
2. Procedure at Geneva in regard to item on Council agenda relating to existing situation in Abyssinia.
3. Spain.
4. Czechoslovakia.
5. The problem of Central Europe with special reference to the possibility of economic assistance to Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia.
6. Future relations with Germany.
7. The contacts between British and French air staffs.
8. The purchase, perhaps on a joint basis, of supplies such as food-stuffs and petrol in time of war.
9. Swiss neutrality.
10. The Far East.



ANNEX II  
DRAFT RESOLUTION WITH REGARD TO ABYSSINIA<sup>7</sup>

ANNEX III  
DRAFT TELEGRAM

*Lord Halifax to His Majesty's Representatives at Berlin and Rome*

(No. .) April , 1938

You should make immediately an oral communication in the following sense to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

In the conversations now proceeding with French Ministers, we have decided to arrange with the French Government for contacts between Air Staffs. These contacts will be a continuation of those established after the reoccupation of the Rhineland, as laid down and published in the Text of Proposals of the 19th March, 1936.

On that occasion they were defined as being directed towards making further arrangements as regards the technical conditions in which our Locarno obligations should be carried out in case of unprovoked aggression. It was further laid down in the Notes exchanged and published on the 1st April, 1936, that they could not give rise to any political undertaking nor to any obligations regarding the organisation of national defence.

We are anxious that the German (Italian) Government should not misunderstand the character and object of the present decision, and His Majesty's Government, therefore, wish to take this early opportunity of informing the German (Italian) Government that it does not represent any fresh departure or involve any new commitment on the part of His Majesty's Government. It is merely the continuance of an arrangement already well-known to the German (Italian) Government, and there is no intention to extend the scope of the contacts contemplated beyond the limits laid down and published in March and April 1936.

A similar communication is being made to the Italian (German) Government.  
(Repeated to Paris.)

ANNEX IV  
FIRST PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ  
[Not printed]

ANNEX V  
SWISS NEUTRALITY  
*Tentative Draft of a Council Resolution*<sup>8</sup>  
[Not printed]

<sup>7</sup> See p. 199, note 3.

<sup>8</sup> The Ministers agreed on a draft resolution to be placed before the Council of the League of Nations whereby the Council would recognize the unconditional neutrality of Switzerland as compatible with her membership of the League, on the understanding that Switzerland would not, by reason of her special position, seek to place obstacles in the way of collective measures which the members of the League might in future agree to take in pursuance of their obligations under the Covenant.

ANNEX VI  
FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ  
[Not printed]

No. 165

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 685 [C 3737/13/17]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 29, 1938*

Sir,

I asked the counsellor of the German Embassy to call on me this afternoon immediately after the conclusion of our conversations with the French Ministers. I told him that I had asked him to do so as I wished to lose no time in giving him, for the information of the German Government, precise information in regard to one subject which had been discussed with the French representatives and to which there had been a great deal of unauthorised and rather misleading reference in the press. This was the question of staff conversations between ourselves and France. I wished Dr. Theodor Kordt to inform his Government that we had agreed with the French Government that the technical staff conversations which had been first entered upon in 1936, and the fact of which had been made public at that time, should be continued. There was nothing new in the decision, except the decision to continue them, and that decision represented no change of policy on the part of His Majesty's Government, who had assumed no further obligations or commitments. I told the counsellor that His Majesty's Government were as anxious as they had always been to use their best endeavours for the promotion of better international feeling, and that this was evidently quite impossible unless we were able, while, as I hoped, reaching better understanding ourselves with Germany, to facilitate a similar rapprochement between Germany and France. It was not necessary for me to remind Dr. Kordt how vitally this depended on the removal of French anxieties, and this had accordingly been one of the principal considerations in our mind in agreeing to continue the process that had been begun three years ago. Dr. Kordt thanked me and said that he would transmit what I had said to the German Government.

I am, &c.  
HALIFAX

No. 166

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 197 [C 3738/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 2, 1938*

Sir,

The Czechoslovak Minister called on me this afternoon at his request and I had a long talk with him. I began by telling him what had passed in the course

of our conversations with the French Ministers as to the action which we had decided to take. I said that we had decided with the French that we would both make representations at Prague, and that His Majesty's Government would take an early opportunity of an approach also to Berlin. As regards the representations at Prague, we should, I had no doubt, make it clear that in our view, if a settlement of this question was to be reached, the Czechoslovak Government would have to be prepared to go a very long way. In regard to the approach to Berlin, it was in our mind to protect ourselves against a German rejoinder to the effect that we really had no call to interest ourselves in what was after all a family matter, by saying that we had been the recipients of emphatic assurances from Field-Marshal Göring at the time of the Austrian 'Anschluss', and that we were very directly interested in the treatment of a question that might mean a European war for the reasons explained by the Prime Minister in his speech in the House of Commons on the 24th March.

2. If, consequently, the German Government did not so reply as to make a further exchange of views impossible, we should propose to say to them that we were using our good offices in Prague to promote a settlement, but that our task would be greatly facilitated if the German Government were able to indicate to us as precisely as possible what measures, in their view, were necessary to meet the alleged grievances of their fellow-Germans in Czechoslovakia.

3. If we succeeded in getting a response to this enquiry, the situation might so develop as to lead up to a point where we might say to the Germans, after discussion with the Czechoslovak Government, that it would appear possible for the Germans to achieve 60 per cent. or 70 per cent. of their purpose by friendly negotiation, but that, if they insisted on the full 100 per cent. of their hypothetical demands, it would probably mean war, into which it was impossible to say who might not be drawn.

4. I went on to tell M. Masaryk that, in our discussions with the French Ministers, some difference of approach had at first been evident, in that M. Daladier had spoken from the text that the military position really in the French view depended upon the political, whereas in the British view the political problem was inevitably largely dependent on, and governed by, the military. In regard to the military problem, I felt bound to tell M. Masaryk that the careful examination which we had given to it did lead to very disturbing conclusions. As I understood it, the 'Anschluss' with Austria had largely turned the Czechoslovak defensive position; Russia's support was of uncertain value; Poland was in none too friendly mood. Moreover, however willing and anxious the French were to honour their treaty commitments and even if Great Britain were drawn into any war that might emerge, it seemed clear to us that, judged purely from the military aspect, it was a physical impossibility for any of Czechoslovakia's friends to prevent the country being overrun by Germany, should Germany decide to do so. The restoration of Czechoslovakia would accordingly have to await the issue of a victorious war with Germany and, even when that point had been

reached, it was, I supposed, doubtful whether, in fact, the Czechoslovak State would be re-created in its present form. I said that, in stating this side of the problem thus frankly, it would be necessary for me to point out that we had no intention of so stating it in quarters that were unfriendly to Czechoslovakia, though they might be expected to have given consideration to the problem in this sense as we had ourselves: but the conclusion from that part of the argument in my own mind was to convince me of the extreme importance of using every diplomatic resource and making every effort to prevent the question issuing in the shape of war.

5. The French Ministers had repeatedly asked us whether, in the event of Dr. Benes being prepared to go a very long way to reach a settlement, we would be prepared to agree that the situation to which his concessions had led him would then be guaranteed by this country. To this we had felt bound to reply that we could in no way enlarge upon the pronouncement of policy made by the Prime Minister on the 24th March last.

6. M. Masaryk replied that he was grateful to me for speaking thus frankly and that nothing that I had said in any way surprised or grieved him. The President was prepared to go a very long way indeed. He did not exclude some solution on the lines of Swiss autonomy, but it would take time to educate the Cabinet and public opinion. He thought that any concessions granted to the Sudetendeutschen should also be extended to the Polish and Hungarian minorities. M. Masaryk told me that his father had never wished to have the Sudetendeutschen in the Czechoslovak State, but they had been 'forced upon him by Lloyd George'. In reply to a question, he somewhat surprised me by saying that, if this kind of solution were adopted for the Sudetendeutschen and if, in consequence, this meant that one day the German minority was detached from the Czechoslovak State and joined the German Reich, he did not think that this would necessarily involve the same process being followed in respect of the Polish and Hungarian minorities.

7. M. Masaryk made a brief reference to the foreign policy of his country, and said that they would feel great difficulty about 'abandoning their friends' at German instance. I assured him that I readily appreciated the position of his Government in this regard.

8. At some point in our conversation the Minister said that his Government would in no way resent our making whatever representations we thought right, even if this went further than his Government had hitherto been prepared to go, and that they would naturally infinitely prefer these to be made by ourselves and the French [? rather] than by the Germans. He did not anticipate himself any military *coup* in the near future, though you could naturally never predict what unforeseen incidents might evoke. He suspected that economic pressure was the more likely form of pressure if any was to be exercised.

9. I finally asked M. Masaryk whether, in the event of our feeling it to be desirable, he would feel embarrassed if, before making our representations at Prague, we were to consult him informally as to the form in which these might be cast. He assured me that his services were constantly at our

disposal and he thought that he was as close to the confidence of Dr. Benes as anyone.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 167

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3)*  
*No. 170 Telegraphic [C 3735/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 3, 1938

Though I have hitherto, for obvious reasons, not attempted to sound the German authorities on the subject, I estimate that article quoted in my telegram No. 168<sup>1</sup> in fact represents fairly accurately the attitude which would be adopted by the German Government towards any offer of mediation on the part of British or French Governments in the matter of the Sudeten Deutsch.

I lunched yesterday with the French and United States Ambassadors both of whom entirely shared the views which I have constantly expressed as to the necessity of federalism for Czechoslovakia. The former asked my opinion as to whether the German Government would be willing to accept our good offices. My reply was, that put in that form, 'definitely not'.

I have no reason whatsoever to doubt, nor have we indeed any justification to believe, that Herr Hitler's reply would be other than that in the second sentence of paragraph 8 of my despatch No. 324<sup>2</sup> of April 1st. So far as I know Herr Hitler himself has hitherto consistently informed Herr Henlein that his party must negotiate direct with Prague. He will persist in this course, partly for safety's sake since it leaves his hands free to act when it suits him and partly to obviate justification of open interference on behalf of the Czechs. The utmost which in my opinion we could hope to obtain from the German Government would be for them to declare themselves willing to give good advice to Henlein in return for our good advice at Prague. Even so this would depend on the nature of the latter which must now be on the basis of the Carlsbad programme. (In this respect I fear that M. Benes has already committed a serious tactical error in not announcing, in advance of the Carlsbad speech, his intention in principle of reorganising the State on basis of federation instead of on that of minorities.)

I realize that it would be difficult for His Majesty's Government to put pressure on M. Benes to accept federation or autonomies unless we can assure him that any arrangement on that basis has the prospect of acceptance by Germany or of permanency. I have little confidence that it will have such a permanent prospect. It is much more probable that in the end the Sudeten will vote themselves out of all union with Prague and into the German Reich.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram quoted an article in the 'National Zeitung' of May 1 denying that the Sudeten question would be a subject of Anglo-German negotiations.

<sup>2</sup> No. 121.



Moreover I anticipate that Herr Hitler will make some conditions as to the eventual principle of self-determination. Nevertheless the Sudetens have rights equal with the Czechs and such a course constitutes, in my opinion, not only the sole hope for a peaceful solution on a moral basis but also the sole hope in the end of maintaining the other Czech frontiers more or less intact. The past has probably got to be sacrificed if anything, in the long run, is to be preserved.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 168

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3)*

*No. 171 Telegraphic [C 3732/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 2, 1938

Herr Hitler leaves for Rome tonight. I cannot foretell what agreements if any will come out of the visit but it is safe to assume that the Germans will endeavour to obtain Italian guarantee at least of benevolent neutrality in the event of a conflict arising out of Sudeten crisis. Germany may well ask in the first instance for definite Italian cooperation of submarines in the event of Russian participation.

On the other hand Signor Mussolini's good offices in Sudeten question might be of great value.

Repeated to Rome.

No. 169

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 692 [C 3781/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 3, 1938

Sir,

The German Ambassador<sup>1</sup> called to see me this afternoon on taking up his appointment. He began by telling me that he had seen Herr von Ribbentrop at a party at the British Embassy in Berlin the night before he left Germany, and that Herr von Ribbentrop had charged him to thank me for having given the information about the Anglo-French staff conversations that I had given on Friday last to the counsellor of the German Embassy. Herr von Ribbentrop had appreciated the fact that this had been done. Towards the end of our conversation the Ambassador reverted to this subject and gave me the opportunity of repeating in other words what I had said last week, and of assuring him that such contacts as we had in these matters with the French were not directed against anybody else, and that I regarded both our close relations with the French and our new agreement with Italy, valuable as they were in themselves, as contributions to the greater whole that we desired to see established in the shape of better international feeling all round.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. von Dirksen.

2. I then said to the Ambassador that, as he might have noticed from the press communiqué, we had given a good deal of thought also to the question of Czechoslovakia, and we had decided, after full discussion with the French, to lend all the help we could, wherever it might be thought most useful, in the interests of an orderly solution of the problem. I had no reason to doubt that the Government of Czechoslovakia were fully anxious on their part to make reasonable contribution to this end, and I greatly hoped that the German Government would be prepared to do the same. To this the Ambassador replied that he did not see that a settlement ought to be impossible, provided that the Sudetendeutschen could be treated as equals by the Czechs and not subject to injustice. At a later point in our conversation, his Excellency used the phrase 'autonomy within the Czechoslovak State' as being the sort of basis on which a solution might be found. I did not think it necessary or appropriate to explore that side of the question with him, but I did say to him that I thought it possible, if we really were to endeavour, as I hoped we might, to assist in the discovery of a possible solution, that we might feel it proper at some stage to make an approach on the subject to the German Government. I hoped that, if and when we did so, there would not be any inclination on the part of the German Government to adopt the attitude of saying that it was not a matter with which we were concerned, and on which, therefore, in their view, we had no right to speak. I fully recognised, of course, the special interest that the German Government must naturally feel in the lot of men of their own race, living adjacent to them across the frontier in another country. But, at the same time, the Czechoslovak problem had much wider implications, and it was, of course, impossible for us to be disinterested in any issue on which the future of European peace might one day be found to depend. The Ambassador said that much would depend upon the way in which any such idea, if we decided to approach the German Government, were presented to them. On one side, Hitler would be disposed to resent anything in the nature of interference, while on the other side he might well be disposed to welcome genuine and sincere assistance in the business of finding a friendly solution to the difficulties. I told the Ambassador that I was very sensible of what might, as he had indicated, be in the German Chancellor's mind, and I would have it in my own. In any case, whatever we decided on, the matter would presumably have to wait until Hitler and those who had accompanied him had returned from Rome.

3. At some point in our conversation his Excellency told me that the Germans were very anxious to keep things quiet in Czechoslovakia, and had used such influence as they possessed upon the Sudetendeutsche people by way of restraint at a time when they had naturally been greatly excited by the passage of events in Austria.

4. The Ambassador struck me as well-disposed and as a person to whom one, as acquaintance advanced, would feel it possible to talk with much greater freedom than to Herr von Ribbentrop.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 170

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 67 Telegraphic [C 3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1938

1. At the meetings between British and French Ministers in London on April 28 and 29<sup>1</sup> (a record of which has been sent to you by bag) it was agreed that a *démarche* should now be made at Prague in concert by yourself and your French colleague on the Sudeten German question, and that an approach should be made to the German Government simultaneously or at about the same time by His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin acting alone.

2. The instructions for your own action are contained in my immediately succeeding telegram. Those of His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin are contained in my telegrams to Berlin Nos. 138 and 139.<sup>2</sup>

3. It is not necessary that your representations and those of your French colleague should be identical in form or content. Indeed I cannot expect, from what the French Ministers said in London, that he will be prepared to represent the present military situation in as unfavourable a light as that in which I see it. But you should of course concert with him closely before acting. It is most desirable that each of you should know what the other is going to say, and that you should ensure that, although the two communications may not be identical, they shall not be in conflict.

4. I am instructing His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris to inform the French Foreign Minister of the purport of your instructions and to urge him to frame the instructions of your French colleague on as nearly similar lines as possible.

5. Your representations should be made orally and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the first place, but you should take as early an opportunity as you conveniently can to repeat them to the Prime Minister and to President Benes.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 172 and 173.

No. 171

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 68 Telegraphic [C 3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

1. The following is the general line of the representation you are to make to the Czechoslovak Government and the material which you are authorised to use in support of it. I leave you discretion to present the argument in the

<sup>1</sup> No. 170.

terms you may consider most appropriate and to make whatever selection of the material may seem to you most useful.

2. You should emphasise the danger of the present situation on the lines of paragraphs 3 and 4 of my despatch to Paris No. 727.<sup>2</sup>

3. You should make it clear how unfavourable His Majesty's Government consider the present military situation *vis-à-vis* Germany not only for Czechoslovakia, but also for France and Great Britain in the event of a German attack upon Czechoslovakia in consequence of which France might decide to support the latter against Germany, and as a further consequence of which Great Britain might subsequently become involved.

4. You will find material for this argument (a) in paragraph 8 of the enclosure in my despatch to Paris No. 581;<sup>3</sup> (b) in my telegram to Paris No. 95;<sup>4</sup> (c) in my observations at the opening of the third meeting with the French Ministers on the morning of April 29 and in the Prime Minister's first intervention on this subject at the same meeting.

5. You may refer to the efficacy of Germany's economic weapon against Czechoslovakia (see my telegram to Paris No. 95).

6. You should repeat that, to their regret, His Majesty's Government for their part cannot contemplate going any further in the way of commitments than was indicated in the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons on March 24; and you may, if you think it desirable, repeat what I said in my telegram No. 53<sup>5</sup> about the danger of giving too broad an interpretation to that statement.

7. It follows from the above, in the view of His Majesty's Government, that the Czechoslovak Government must make a supreme effort to reach a settlement with the representatives of the Sudeten German Party in the interest of Czechoslovakia's survival, as well as of European peace.

8. Negotiations should be pursued at the earliest possible moment. I note with regret and apprehension from your telegram No. 102<sup>6</sup> that in the view of the President of the Council serious negotiations will not be possible till after the communal elections, that is to say until June. Such delay seems to me to be dangerous.

9. The negotiations should cover the whole field of the problem, and have as their object a comprehensive and lasting settlement. This settlement will, we feel, have to be founded upon a broader basis of concession than has been hitherto contemplated.

10. You should say that His Majesty's Government note with interest President Benes's statement to you, reported in your telegram No. 82,<sup>7</sup> that he had long held that Czechoslovakia could not be a national state and that it was realised by the Czechoslovak Government that his programme meant an end of the conception of a national state. This statement seems to show that the President is resolved to tackle the problem in a realist spirit, and His Majesty's Government hope that it may be possible to make progress starting from the conception of a 'state of nationalities'.

<sup>2</sup> No. 135.    <sup>3</sup> No. 106.    <sup>4</sup> No. 107.    <sup>5</sup> No. 139.    <sup>6</sup> No. 161.    <sup>7</sup> No. 154.

11. His Majesty's Government however find it difficult to express an opinion on the proposals of the Czechoslovak Government enclosed in your despatch No. 117<sup>8</sup> or on the memorandum on the Nationality Policy of the Czechoslovak Republic communicated by the Czechoslovak Minister here on April 26th (see my despatch No. 187)<sup>9</sup> until they can judge of what I might call their 'settlement value', or in other words until they know how far Herr Henlein would be prepared to accept them. But from the analysis and appreciation of Herr Henlein's Carlsbad speech contained in your telegram No. 94<sup>10</sup> and from the comments of the Minister for Foreign Affairs on that speech reported in your telegram No. 95<sup>11</sup> it seems that there is still a great gulf between the two parties to be bridged. The Czechoslovak Government have, therefore, I feel a good way to go yet before they can hope to find the basis of a reasonable compromise, nor am I sure that their proposals can be described as a very great advance towards that 'state of nationalities' which President Benes appears to have in mind.

12. It remains to add that if the Czechoslovak Government will keep His Majesty's Government informed of developments, His Majesty's Government will be ready at any appropriate moment and in any appropriate manner to use their influence to assist to secure a settlement, and that His Majesty's Government are proposing to make plain to the German Government their keen interest in this question and their desire to help to promote a peaceful and equitable settlement of it. You should not at the present stage say more than this about Sir N. Henderson's approach to the German Government. But you should make it plain that His Majesty's Government would have little hope of any successful intervention in Berlin either in the direction of inducing patience or achieving ultimate settlement unless the Czechoslovak Government show that they are resolved to make a very serious effort.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>8</sup> No. 150.

<sup>9</sup> Not printed. See No. 160 for the memorandum under reference.

<sup>10</sup> Not printed.

<sup>11</sup> No. 158.

## No. 172

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 138 Telegraphic [C 3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1938

1. At the meetings between British and French Ministers in London on April 28th and 29th<sup>1</sup> (a record of which has been sent to you by bag) it was agreed that a *démarche* should now be made at Prague in concert by His Majesty's Minister and the French Minister on the Sudeten German question, and that an approach should be made to the German Government simultaneously or at about the same time by Your Excellency acting alone.

2. The instructions sent to His Majesty's Minister at Prague are contained in my telegrams to him Nos. 67 and 68.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 164.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 170 and 171.



3. You should ask to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs as soon as convenient after his return from Rome and speak to him in the following sense.

4. The object of the present approach to the German Government is to inform them that His Majesty's Government and the French Government are using their influence in Prague to promote a peaceful and equitable settlement of the Sudeten German question; and to express the hope that the German Government will be ready to use their influence with the Sudeten Germans in the direction of moderation and to work with His Majesty's Government in promoting a settlement.

5. On such information as His Majesty's Government have in their possession, a peaceful settlement ought certainly to be capable of achievement. They recall the German Chancellor's remark to you on March 3, reported in your telegram No. 70,<sup>3</sup> that he was perfectly willing to live in peace and amity with Czechoslovakia on condition that the Sudeten obtained full equality; and that if Great Britain really desired German friendship, it was indispensable that His Majesty's Government should make it clear at Prague that they would not encourage the Czechoslovak Government in refusing proper treatment to nationals of German origin.

6. So far from encouraging the Czechoslovak Government in this sense, His Majesty's Government are actively engaged in urging that Government to go to the limit of concession in an effort to reach a comprehensive and lasting agreement with the Sudeten Germans.

7. His Majesty's Government would not wish to intervene in any matter of exclusively German-Czech relations. They recognise of course that the lot of the Sudeten Germans must be a matter of particular interest to Germany, but in the present situation it is undeniable that the problems that have been raised may affect the peace of Europe. It is the chief concern of His Majesty's Government, as it is doubtless that of the German Government, that peace should not be disturbed. That is their justification for raising this matter with the German Government, and indeed they feel it their duty to offer any assistance that they can give—and they believe that in the present situation they are able to assist—towards reaching an equitable solution.

8. His Majesty's Government are now using their influence urgently with the Czechoslovak Government to bring them to seek without delay a solution of the problem on comprehensive lines by direct negotiation with the Sudeten Germans. (You should not at the present stage say more than this about the character of Mr. Newton's *démarche* at Prague.) His Majesty's Government are thus doing their best to bring about a peaceful and equitable solution by representing to the Czechoslovak Government the necessity for a contribution from their side. But it takes two to make an agreement, and if a settlement is to be reached, it is to be hoped that Henlein may be prevailed upon also to show a spirit of accommodation.

9. His Majesty's Government do not stand on punctilio in this matter, and they trust that the German Government will not do so either. The

<sup>3</sup> See preceding volume of this Collection.

Sudeten Germans are Czech citizens but the Government of the Reich has undoubtedly a powerful influence upon the population of German race and speech living across the Czechoslovak-German frontier. And since the question is one that closely affects the peace of Europe, His Majesty's Government trust that, in view of the action taken by His Majesty's Government at Prague, the German Government will use their influence with Henlein in the direction of moderation. His Majesty's Government have no doubt that the German Government would prefer a peaceful and orderly solution of the question to any other, and they are hopeful that the German Government will use all their influence on behalf of such a solution.

10. In one other way the German Government could, His Majesty's Government believe, assist towards the achievement of a settlement. If His Majesty's Government are to use their influence in Prague, they must have some idea of the terms that would be likely from the German point of view to form the basis of an agreed settlement. If they encourage the Czechoslovak Government to put forward proposals that do not prove acceptable, their effort may be of no avail. If however the German Government could indicate the lines of a settlement which in their view would be satisfactory to the Sudeten Deutsch, His Majesty's Government would consider how far they could recommend acceptance by the Czechoslovak Government.

Please see my immediately succeeding telegram.<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>4</sup> No. 173.

### No. 173

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 139 Telegraphic [C 3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

1. I am reluctant to leave the German Government in complete ignorance of our views until the Chancellor and his Ministers return from Rome next week. I shall be glad therefore if you will seek an early interview with Field-Marshal Göring and speak to him in the following sense.

2. You should begin by repeating to him the information I gave to the German Chargé d'Affaires about the proposed Anglo-French Staff contacts (see my despatch No. 685).<sup>2</sup>

3. You could go on to say that as regards Czechoslovakia it was agreed that both His Majesty's Government and the French Government should use their influence at Prague to promote a peaceful and equitable solution of the Sudeten German question. His Majesty's Government are now urging the Czechoslovak Government to seek without delay a solution of this problem on comprehensive lines by direct negotiation with the Sudeten

<sup>1</sup> No. 172.

<sup>2</sup> No. 165.

Germans. His Majesty's Government wish to inform the German Government of this and to express the hope that the German Government will be ready to use their influence to promote a settlement.

4. You should say that you have instructions to speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly as soon as he is accessible, but that His Majesty's Government think it desirable that the German Government should be made aware in general terms without further delay of the action His Majesty's Government are taking. You would hope to pursue the question in greater detail with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on his return.

5. Unless the reaction of the field-marshal is plainly unfavourable, you may leave the matter there and say no more. If, however, his reaction should be unfavourable and if, for example, he should attempt to contest the right of His Majesty's Government to broach this matter with the German Government at all, you should persuasively but firmly rebut such an argument and put as much of the case as stated in my immediately preceding telegram as may be necessary to make the attitude of His Majesty's Government clear.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Warsaw, and Budapest.

#### No. 174

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 118 Telegraphic [C 3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1938

1. My telegrams to Prague Nos. 67 and 68<sup>1</sup> contain my instructions to His Majesty's Minister at Prague for his approach to the Czechoslovak Government on the Sudeten German question. Please inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the general lines of these instructions and urge him to frame the instructions for the French Minister in Prague on the same lines or on as nearly similar lines as possible.

2. You should also inform Minister for Foreign Affairs of the terms of the instructions to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin contained in my telegrams to him Nos. 138 and 139.<sup>2</sup> You will note that these instructions cover only the first stage of our action at Berlin as outlined at the foot of page 34 and top of page 35 of the printed record of the Anglo-French conversations.<sup>3</sup> It was agreed in London that our action might be carried out in two stages and you should inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the second stage has not of course been overlooked.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome,<sup>4</sup> Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 170 and 171.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 172 and 173.

<sup>3</sup> i.e. pp. 231-2 above.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Perth was instructed on May 4 that Nos. 169 to 173 were sent to him 'for his information only, pending further instructions'. On May 7 Lord Perth received instructions to tell the Italian Government of the Anglo-French *démarche* and to explain in general terms the sense of the communications which His Majesty's Government were making to the Czechoslovak and German Governments.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)*

*No. 140 [C 3840/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 4, 1938*

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador called to see me this afternoon with the object of having some exchange of views before he returned to Poland in the next day or two. He told me that he understood that Colonel Beck, to his great regret, was not able to go to Geneva for the Council meeting.

2. The Ambassador began by saying that he had been over in Paris, where he had seen his opposite number, from whom he had received a pretty full account, furnished to the latter by the French Ministers, of the Anglo-French conversations. His Excellency referred, in particular, to the two topics of staff contacts and Czechoslovakia. As to the first, I repeated to him the kind of statement I had already made to the German and Italian Ambassadors, to the effect that these contacts, on which we had agreed, were merely a continuation of arrangements made in 1936, as to which there had been no secret, and that they did not involve any reorientation of policy or acceptance of new commitments.

3. Turning to Czechoslovakia, Count Raczynski told me that he understood that the French Government and we had agreed to make parallel representations in Prague, and that it was in contemplation that these might be supported by some *démarche* on our part in Berlin. I told him that this was in general the position and that it would be our hope to be of service in facilitating a solution of this troublesome question by lending our good offices wherever they might be thought likely to be of any assistance. I was well aware that there might be a certain inclination on the part of the German Government to feel that this was a matter that only concerned themselves and Czechoslovakia, but we were vitally and directly interested because of the possible impact of unwise handling of this question upon European peace. The Ambassador said that he fully appreciated our position, but he was not without anxiety lest the German Government should feel that it was for them rather of the nature of a domestic matter.

4. His Excellency then turned to some reference to the conversation that Colonel Beck had recently had with your Excellency, from which he appeared to have very much the information that you had previously conveyed to me by telegram. He assured me that the Polish Government were genuinely anxious to improve relations with the Czechoslovak Government and that any suggestion to the contrary was ill-founded and mischievous. I told his Excellency that I was very pleased indeed to have that assurance, which indeed confirmed what I had naturally been previously disposed to believe, and that I thought Colonel Beck could render no more useful service to the cause of European peace at this time than by taking steps, in consultation with the Czechoslovak Government, to clear up any points of difference that might

exist between them, and generally combining their efforts to lower the temperature in that quarter.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 176

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6)*

*No. 144 [C 3966/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 4, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith copy of a despatch from His Majesty's consul at Liberec regarding the situation in the Sudeten German area.

2. In the first paragraph of his despatch Mr. Pares expresses the view that the Sudeten Germans wish to obtain the most they can without the risk of a war. This final qualification should be of importance if they believe that secession would involve that risk.

3. I would draw attention to the view expressed by Mr. Pares in the second paragraph of his despatch to the effect that Herr Henlein's profession of Nazi principles is a concession to the wishes of a large part of the rank and file of the party. This bears out the view that it is not so much Herr Henlein who leads the movement as the movement that leads him. As the body and the tail would in present circumstances certainly take their orders from the Reich, the head therefore must do the same. Similarly, while it may well be true that the big industrialists will embrace National Socialism with reluctance, the strength of the movement lies rather with the employees. If it appears, as suggested in the despatch from His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin to you No. 376,<sup>1</sup> and as I have heard from other sources, that a great deal is being done by the Reich to improve the lot of the working classes in Austria, the desire of the same classes in the Sudeten areas to be incorporated in the Reich will receive a powerful stimulus.

4. Finally, I would draw attention to the fifth paragraph of Mr. Pares's despatch, in which he refers to the rumours which have recently been circulating in Liberec, and would refer in this connexion to my telegram No. 100, Saving.<sup>2</sup> Other evidence has also reached me of the spread of alarmist rumours and it is of interest to note the conclusion to which Mr. Pares is inclined, namely, that they are being circulated by the Henlein party or from Germany in order to maintain a state of tension.

5. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported that the rumours in question had been officially denied after investigations by the Czech authorities.



ENCLOSURE IN No. 176  
*Consul Pares to Mr. Newton*  
*No. 18*

LIBEREC, May 2, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to report that though the Sudeten Germans in their press and in private conversation indicate that they consider themselves entitled to demand much more, i.e., a plebiscite, they appear, nevertheless, to have accepted Henlein's Karlsbad programme as a basis for negotiation with the Czechs. At yesterday's meeting here Henlein's references to his programme were greeted with what seemed like genuine applause. Now, as formerly, the attitude of the Sudeten Germans is that they wish to obtain the greatest possible measure of fulfilment of their aims which can be secured without the risk of a war. At the present moment they are all convinced that circumstances are particularly favourable to them and they set their demands high accordingly, but I believe that should it become apparent that less is obtainable they would be content with that. The only indispensable condition for a settlement is that the Sudeten Germans should be granted absolute equality of status with the Czechs inside the State. Henlein, they say, is not a dictator but an executor ('Vollstrecker') of the popular will. They are probably prepared to accept a compromise if it is necessary, but their patience diminishes as their strategical position improves and the Czechs show no signs of making any concessions. Hence the demands put forward by Henlein become more and more radical. So far as I can ascertain the demand for recognition of the national boundary ('Volksgrenze') is generally interpreted as meaning that at least only German officials shall exercise the functions of administration in German areas whilst the claim for reparation would involve the immediate withdrawal of all Czech officials. Apart from these two definite ideas about the application of Henlein's Karlsbad programme the average Sudeten German seems to have only a vague notion of how it will be worked in detail. Some form of compensation for holders of the Austrian War Loan and possibly restitution of some of the extensive forest domains confiscated under the Land Reform Act are also suggested. It is maintained that in the latter case the land was bought from its pre-war owners at absurdly low prices and that as the State is the present owner a restitution does not offer the same difficulties as would hinder the restitution of land which has been distributed among private persons.

2. Henlein's profession of Nazi principles appears to be a concession to the wishes of a large part of the rank and file of the party, who, however, in the eyes of the genuine Nazi group (which left the party in December but rejoined it after the 'Anschluss') know little enough about the real National Socialist ideas and confound them vaguely with allegiance to Hitler and the Third Reich. This sort of Nazism is probably superficial and is satisfied with what may be merely lip-service to National Socialism. It is certainly paradoxical that Henlein, Sebekowski and Sandner, members of the Kamerad-

schaftsbund which adopted Professor Spann's political theories should now profess to be National Socialists. One of the first measures taken in Vienna after the 'Anschluss' and, as I have heard, in Berlin after the 'Machtübernahme' was the arrest of Spann's followers. Moreover, the genuine Nazis in the Henlein party have been systematically opposed by Henlein and his associates until quite recently. There was once a time when, according to a Nazi friend of mine, the speakers of the Henlein party attacked Krebe [? Krebs] quite openly. He said that even now, though he has rejoined the party, some people have endeavoured to procure his dismissal from his present job on the ground that he has been a supporter of Dr. Jonek. The new members of the Sudeten German party who have recently joined from the ranks of the Activist parties—above all the Christian Socialists whose separate organisation has not been dissolved so far but has only suspended its activities for the time being—cannot yet be reckoned whole-hearted Nazis. I know some who find this item of the Karlsbad programme the most difficult to approve. On the other hand, a recent press report states that the Christian Socialist Gymnastic Association for young people ('Christlich-Soziale Turnerschaft') has decided to dissolve and merge itself in the 'Deutscher Turnverband' so that it may be assumed that after a short time at least the younger generation of Christian Socialists will have been really assimilated in the Sudeten German party.

3. A section of the party by which National Socialism will be embraced only reluctantly is the group of big industrialists. Following the example of the Reich some of the small factory owners have agreed to pay their workmen wages for the 1st May though it falls on a Sunday, but the Central Employers' Committee of the Industrialists' Association ('Hauptverband der Industrie'), after a special meeting called to discuss the matter, was unable to do more than recommend to its individual members that they should give consideration to the question of giving a bonus and that they should grant it if possible. A local banker has told me that many of the big industrialists in this neighbourhood have grumbled to him about the National Socialist tendency of the Henlein party's social policy. It is probable, however, that they may not be able to check it. It is perhaps significant that the head of the Liberec Employers' Committee of the Industrialists' Association has gone to Berlin to study the organisation of 'Kraft durch Freude', no doubt with the view of introducing some of its features into industrial concerns in this country.

4. Other internal developments in the Henlein party which are tending to bring it into line with National Socialism in the Reich are the introduction of the 'Arierparagraph' and the ban on membership of any secret organisations, such as freemasons' lodges, &c. As a result the organisation known as Schlaraffia, which is comparatively harmless so far as I know, has been disbanded here and in Karlsbad. Through the growth in its receipts from contributions due to the influx of new members and through its increasing control of every form of social activity of its members the party has been able to found several 'holiday homes' for married women. Welfare work of this kind done by the party for its members is sure to increase its reputation and influence.

5. Certain fantastic rumours have been circulating in Liberec during the past few days. On Friday night the German news broadcast announced that a revolt had been planned in the garrison here, but that it had been discovered in time by a Sudeten German. This caused great excitement, but nobody whom I have questioned has any knowledge of the details of the alleged plot. On Saturday night there was an absurd rumour that the Czechs intended to mine the open space where Henlein was to speak on the following day. It sounds incredible, but I know that this story was believed not only by ignorant persons but also by intelligent and educated persons. The local press has published reports that an *agent provocateur* is operating in this district, and warns the Sudeten Germans against him. The aim of all these rumours appears to be to persuade the local population that the Czechs are endeavouring to incite them to some act of provocation, but since on all occasions when provocation is actually offered the Czech authorities withdraw to avoid trouble one is almost forced to the conclusion that the rumours are being circulated by the opposite side—either by the Henlein party or by Germany—in order to maintain a state of tension.

6. A business man in Liberec has informed me that the excitement in the Karlsbad district is very great indeed. His friends there, he said, consider that the people in Liberec are 'fast asleep': in Karlsbad the population 'is in a state of turmoil' ('im Aufruhr'). I have not visited West Bohemia so I cannot confirm this, but judging from the Military Attaché's account of his impressions at Karlsbad on the 1st May I should say that this report is true. The enthusiasm seems to have been much greater than at Liberec and the marchers shouted 'Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Führer!' whereas at Liberec the formula was only 'Ein Volk, Ein Führer, Ein Sieg!' My informant also told me that when the prefect in Eger banned the Henlein party's May Day demonstration the local party office informed him that the party could march in spite of the prohibition, so it was withdrawn.

I have, &c.,  
P. PARES

No. 177

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5)*

*No. 109 Telegraphic: by telephone [C3879/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 5, 1938

Your telegram No. 75.<sup>1</sup>

I called immediately on my French colleague to find that he is without instructions and has been summoned urgently to Paris doubtless to receive them. He leaves by aeroplane early Friday<sup>2</sup> and ought to be back late

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of May 4 (8 p.m.) gave Mr. Newton further instructions for his *démarche* with the Czechoslovak Government. Mr. Newton was told that before taking action he should read the record of the Anglo-French meetings.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton reported on May 6 that owing to the desire of the French Government to meet the wishes of His Majesty's Government, the French Minister's visit to Paris had been

Saturday and has to spend the whole of Sunday at a Congress over which he is presiding.

Earliest date for his *démarche* will be Monday, when M. Krofta, Minister for Foreign Affairs, should be back. In consequence if we are to concert beforehand, to act on same day, and to see the same person, I cannot act on Friday. Unless otherwise instructed, I propose therefore to defer my own *démarche* accordingly and will telegraph to confirm whether even Monday will be possible for the French Minister, so soon as he is able to inform me after his return from Paris.

From the wording of the penultimate paragraph of your telegram I am not sure whether you realize that the record of the London meeting will not reach me in the bag until Friday. Meanwhile I am informing my French colleague of the tenour of part of the instructions unofficially now, and we are both applying for appointments to see Minister for Foreign Affairs on Monday May 9.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome and Paris.

cancelled. Mr. Newton had therefore arranged for the joint *démarche* to take place as soon as possible after the return of M. Krofta (probably on May 7) from the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the 'Little Entente' states at Sinaia.

#### No. 178

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 176 Telegraphic: by telephone [C3893/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 5, 1938

Your telegram No. 139.<sup>1</sup>

I learn from Reuters that it is announced in London press that I am to seek an interview with General Göring to discuss Czechoslovakia.<sup>2</sup>

On the receipt of your telegram under reference I had been gravely exercised in my mind as to expediency of making the communication in question to General Göring rather than to Ministry of Foreign Affairs which would be more normal and recognised procedure. I am loath to apply for interview unless I can expect to obtain useful information. In this case only reaction which I could expect would be reply to the effect that all depends on the nature of the advice given at Prague. I would not anticipate outburst against interference which I have ample material to justify. I should, however, be told that German Government regard the question as one which must be entirely negotiated direct between Henlein and Prague and that they consider the former's Carlsbad proposals as suitable minimum or at least a basis for negotiation. As regards German Government's general view as to what they would be prepared to accept I should be referred to Herr Hitler's various public declarations as well as his statements to me on March 3 as recapitu-

<sup>1</sup> No. 173.

<sup>2</sup> The Foreign Office was unable to trace the source from which this information reached the press.

lated in paragraph 8 of my despatch No. 324<sup>3</sup> of April 1. Nor indeed in Chancellor's absence would General Göring venture to say more.

I appreciate the desirability of making notification to German Government without awaiting the return from Rome of Herr Hitler and Minister for Foreign Affairs. But in the circumstances as set forth in above and as fortified by premature announcement in London, I submit most earnestly that I be authorised to make communication in question not to General Göring but to Ministry of Foreign Affairs as preliminary to fuller discussion which I would have with Herr von Ribbentrop immediately on his return to Berlin.

If thought desirable communication might similarly be made to German Ambassador in London.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>3</sup> No. 121.

### No. 179

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 136 Telegraphic [C3888/1941/18]*

PARIS, May 5, 1938, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 118.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs concurs in instructions sent to Mr. Newton and will instruct French Minister at Prague to concert closely with latter and speak in a similar sense to Czechoslovak Government. His Excellency assured me that one wish of French Government was to work in closest possible collaboration with His Majesty's Government over this Sudeten question.

M. Bonnet hopes the communications to be made to German Government by His Majesty's Ambassador will be made with all possible earnestness as he feels sure that peace of Europe depends upon a healthy realisation by Germany that Great Britain and France are very close together and are equally interested in peaceful solution of Sudeten question and opposed to use of force by Germany.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 174.

### No. 180

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 145 Telegraphic [C3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1938, 9.0 p.m.

I think it may be useful to you in your interviews with Field-Marshal Göring and Minister for Foreign Affairs if I supplement somewhat the instructions sent to you in my telegrams Nos. 138 and 139.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 172 and 173.



You will have seen that the action we are proposing in Berlin is divided into two stages.

The first stage is comprised in the action you are instructed to take in my two telegrams referred to above. Under the instructions you are to broach the Sudeten question in a preliminary way with Field-Marshal Göring, and you are to pursue the question in greater detail with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on his return from Italy. The extent to which you would use with Göring the material contained in my telegram No. 139 would depend upon the kind of reception the Field-Marshal gave to your remarks.

In this first stage we should (1) indicate to the German Government the action we are taking in Prague; (2) ask them to exercise their influence in favour of a settlement; and (3) ask them for their views as to the terms which should form the basis of a settlement.

In the second stage we should proceed to the further step outlined at the bottom of page 34 and top of page 35<sup>2</sup> of the printed record of the Anglo-French conversations. It is, as you will see, a kind of warning to the German Government.

You have so far not received instructions to take this further step. We wish to reserve this for a later occasion in the event of it appearing unlikely that a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten German question can be reached. We wish to be the judges both of the moment at which and of the terms in which the warning should be conveyed, in the light of the reaction of the German Government to the approach you have been instructed to make to them.

We do not wish to convey this warning unless and until it is really necessary to do so. If the German Government show themselves receptive to our approach and helpful in their attitude, the warning might never need to be given at all. If, on the other hand, they should rebuff our approach and lead us to believe that they were going to insist on a 100 per cent. settlement of the Sudeten question by the threat or use of force, then we should have no alternative but to point out the risks they would be running by so doing.

This is for the future. For the present, however, what I would like you to try to convey to the German Government is that we have no desire to interfere in what they may regard as their own domestic sphere. We cannot be expected to look upon their relations with the Sudeten Germans in the same light as they do themselves; but we are fully prepared to recognise that they have a special interest. Our main concern, and this is the real ground for our action, is our desire to do anything we can to promote a settlement of the question, which if it remains unsettled may very well lead to war. We clearly cannot be disinterested in a question that may involve an outbreak of war, with all that that would entail for Europe at large, and not impossibly for ourselves as well. We are convinced that Dr. Benes, and the French Government too, are prepared to do their best to find a peaceful and equitable settlement, and we sincerely hope the German Government will be prepared to do the same. Our desire is to help towards a friendly solution: our belief

<sup>2</sup> See No. 174, note 3.

is that we can contribute to that end, and we could not therefore refrain from offering our good offices.

As regards the terms of what any such settlement should be, we have, as you will see, been careful not to express ourselves except in the most general terms, and we want to avoid becoming implicated in any discussion that will involve our being called upon to adjudicate on the merits of any particular plan. We must try to ride the line between giving our blessing in advance to anything that the Germans may propose and sponsoring at Berlin some plan that Benes may submit to us.

These are some of the considerations underlying the instructions I have sent you, and I hope they will help you in the conduct of your conversations.

### No. 181

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 177 Telegraphic [C3921/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 5, 1938, 9.25 p.m.

It appears from your recent telegrams on Czechoslovakia and record of your conversations with French Ministers that it would be useful for you to have precise information in regard to Germany's views, desiderata and intentions. I venture therefore to summarise reports I have addressed to you on this subject. They are not speculations; they are based on clear statements principally by Herr Hitler and Field-Marshal Göring who would have nothing to add to them.

#### *Views.*

1. The sacred right of self-determination has been refused consistently to Sudeten Germans.
2. Germany is natural and rightful protector of German race.
3. 'The present situation is impossible' (Hitler to me March 3. See also paragraph 8 of my despatch 324 April i.)<sup>1</sup>

#### *Desiderata.*

1. Autonomy, not necessarily territorial, must be given to Sudeten Germans.
2. A settlement must be negotiated between Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein.
3. Herr Henlein's demands constitute a minimum. (In face of a firm and generous offer from Czechoslovak Government they might possibly be slightly abated.)
4. Russian alliance must go and an end be put to anti-German foreign policy by Czechoslovakia.

#### *Intentions.*

1. Ultimate incorporation of Sudeten Germans remains a German aim

<sup>1</sup> No. 121.

but full autonomy would be an acceptable transitional and even just possibly permanent arrangement.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 182

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Vereker (Moscow)*

*No. 268 [C 3995/13/17]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1938

Sir,

I asked the Soviet Ambassador to call to see me to-day. I began by telling him that I had hoped to be able to ask him to call earlier in the week so that I might inform him of the general tenor of our Anglo-French conversations. I had, however, been prevented from doing this owing to pressure of other engagements. I told him that I thought both the French and we had found these conversations of great value and that we had been able to reach complete agreement at them. With regard to the staff contacts on which we had agreed, I told him that these were a continuation of those that had been arranged and made public two years ago and implied no new departure in policy and no new obligations.

2. In regard to Czechoslovakia, I spoke to him in general terms of the line of action on which we had agreed with the French, namely, that we should both make representations at Prague in the sense of asking the Czechoslovak Government to go as far as they could in the direction of a settlement, and that at the appropriate moment we should also make an approach on the same subject in Berlin, urging both patience and moderation in view of the efforts that we were making at Prague. We did not propose to make ourselves responsible for any detailed proposals that might be made from whatever quarter, but we were anxious to lend our best offices to the service of all those who might honestly be seeking agreement.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 183

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 147 Telegraphic [C3893/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 6, 1938, 1.05 a.m.

Your telegram No. 176.<sup>1</sup>

I agree that there may be disadvantage in making communication to General Göring, and that you may make it to Ministry for Foreign Affairs if you consider that suitable and preferable. You will no doubt have in mind possibility of Göring taking it amiss, if you act as it were behind his back to subordinate member of Foreign Office and you would perhaps consider it

<sup>1</sup> No. 178.

desirable to tell Göring that you had made such a communication to Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

I would point out that if reaction were to effect that all depends on nature of advice given in Prague, that in turn depends to some extent on what are German aims and demands. Without being able to guarantee that we could seek or obtain full satisfaction of these from Czechoslovak Government, we could at least try to secure an approximation to them. It is not much use our urging Czechoslovak Government to make offer to the German side, who are only waiting to give the easy reply that they are 'not enough', and bidding up higher. If the Germans honestly want an arrangement, and if their complaints are well founded, it is up to them to indicate the kind of thing they want in greater precision than has yet been done.

His Majesty's Government themselves would desire that the matter should be settled between Henlein and Prague. And it is because they think that they have some influence with the latter, that they are prepared to offer assistance, and may reasonably expect that assistance, sincerely offered, to be accepted.

Above is for your general guidance. Method of approach and degree to which you make use of these arguments is left to your discretion.

#### No. 184

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6, 7.0 p.m.)  
No. 180 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3969/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 6, 1938

Record of conversations with French Ministers conveys the impression that they are obsessed by the necessity of taking a stand before it is too late against the realization of German unity. In consequence they give too little consideration to (1) realities of the situation, (2) merits of the dispute.

(1) French Prime Minister mentions the possibility of rallying support of Little Entente and even Poland. I am unaware of what happened at Sinaia but judging from conversations with my colleagues here and by past experience I am convinced that if it is merely a question of the Sudeten, there is not the faintest hope of this. The only *casus belli* for Roumania and Yugoslavia would be if Hungary were also to attack Czechoslovakia which for that reason she is unlikely to do. Roumania might allow Russian aeroplanes to pass over her territory but would not allow troops to do so even if the Soviet Government were ready to send them. As for Poland my Yugoslav colleague tells me Poland will even make it a *casus belli* against the Soviet if a single Russian aeroplane flies over Polish territory. This is generally confirmed by General Göring's language to me about Poland.

A Pole in the confidence of his Government yesterday told a member of my staff that if German troops cross the frontier into Czechoslovakia Poland will certainly march too, not so much out of hostility to Czechoslovakia or because of Polish minority which is unimportant, but to prevent Germany seizing all the loot. There would be no previous arrangement with the

German Government but the latter would perforce acquiesce in Polish action.<sup>1</sup>

(2) French Ministers disclaim the desire of launching a preventive war but this is what their proposals really amount to. If it is only a question of making a stand some time and somewhere against Germany I earnestly submit that Sudeten question does not constitute a suitable or favourable opportunity. As I have pointed out before (a) we are on a weak moral basis, (b) Germans are convinced of the justice of their cause. Even if we won the war, the urge towards German unity would merely receive a temporary setback but nothing more. It is even doubtful whether we should agree at the peace negotiations to repeat the risk of placing blocks of Germans under foreign domination.

The conclusion to be reached is that only the widest concessions by Prague can save the situation. You may rely on the seriousness of the language which I shall hold to the Germans but it is rather for the French Government to hold strongest possible language at Prague. Even if the French Ministers are right and we can temporarily cow Germany by a show of force, peace will not thereby be saved. Germans will not accept the situation with good grace, we shall have to be perpetually on the watch, armaments will continue to pile up and relations of Western Powers with Germany will progressively deteriorate. Only when Germany makes it clear (which she has not yet done) that in addition to self-determination for the Sudeten she aims at the elimination of Czechoslovakia from the map, should we be justified in making the stand desired by the French Ministers.

It is essential to realize that German unity is for the Germans a vital issue and bluff is not going to succeed. It is not sixty or seventy per cent. of Henlein's demands which should be granted but eighty or ninety per cent. if his, no less than Herr Hitler's extremist followers, are not to be allowed to force the pace. As . . .<sup>2</sup> here has said to me 'Sudeten must be bribed to remain willing citizens'. Both Herr Hitler and Henlein are moderate compared to many of their followers and M. Benes's sole hope in my opinion and in the interests of his country is to make such a maximum offer that these two cannot well decline it.

Repeated to Prague, Paris and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> In a telegram of May 8 Sir H. Kennard stated that he agreed generally with Sir N. Henderson's views regarding the probable attitude of Poland in the event of a serious crisis in German-Czechoslovak relations.

<sup>2</sup> A name is here omitted.

## No. 185

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9)*

*No. 111 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4056/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 6, 1938

My telegram No. 105 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

In official circles it is said that Czechoslovak Government were greatly surprised by strength both of the Czech and of the anti-Henlein German

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.



demonstrators in Sudetic districts on May 1 as well as by the absence of clashes between the various demonstrators. They felt that this was a three-fold success.

A. It disposed of any argument that the Czech population in Sudeten districts was insignificant.

B. It showed that there was still considerable German opposition to Henlein.

C. It proved efficacy of Government measures to ensure order.

These arguments amount to little in my view. Henlein party do not dispute the fact of large Czech population in Sudetic districts but argue that majority have been artificially imported since the war and ought to be turned out.

Secondly I see no reason to expect left-wing Germans would if it came to the point stand up to National Socialists here any better than they did in Germany and Austria.

Thirdly absence of disorder is as much a tribute to German discipline as to Czech.

Addressed to Foreign Office, repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 186

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*  
*No. 302 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 3837/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 7, 1938

You should now let Minister for Foreign Affairs know, if you can conveniently do so, that His Majesty's Minister and French Minister are approaching the Czechoslovak Government about the Sudeten German question this afternoon. You may explain to him, in confidence, the broad sense of His Majesty's Minister's representation basing yourself in general terms on paragraphs 6 to 9 inclusive and 12 of my telegram to Prague No. 68.<sup>1</sup> You will not of course refer to the arguments about the military situation contained in the earlier part of that telegram.

You should also let him know the sense of the communication which is being made to German Government, basing yourself on paragraphs 3 and 4 of my telegram to Berlin No. 139.<sup>2</sup> His Majesty's Ambassador is seeing the Political Director this morning.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 171.

<sup>2</sup> No. 173.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 7)*  
*No. 181 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4011/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 7, 1938

I made communication in accordance with instructions in your telegram No. 139<sup>1</sup> to Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning.

His only comment was that the matter was one for direct negotiation between Prague and Henlein. I replied that that was also the view of His Majesty's Government but if we were to use our influence with Prague as Herr Hitler had suggested to me on March 3 that we should, it was only proper that Germany should equally use hers with Sudeten. Political Director replied that German Government had given no precise advice to Henlein. Nor, I said, were we giving precise advice at Prague. We were urging in general terms a comprehensive settlement such as, speaking quite confidentially, a state of nationalities rather than a national state would imply.

Political Director said that he would notify Minister for Foreign Affairs in Rome by telegraph of my *démarche*. I also requested him to mention it to Field-Marshal Göring partly, as I said, because the British press had erroneously reported that I would be making communication to him and partly because Field-Marshal Göring had, as he knew, been speaking recently somewhat wildly on this subject. I took this as text to warn the Political Director seriously of the danger of the situation. Some people believed here that what had happened in Austria could be repeated with impunity in Czechoslovakia. The circumstances were very different as France had an agreement with the latter and if a *casus belli* was invoked there was no knowing how far the complication might spread.

Political Director assured me that the last thing which German Government wanted was to march into Czechoslovakia. I told him I did not doubt this for one moment but the danger lay in the possibility of an incident provoked by irresponsible subordinates on either side of the frontier.

I mentioned that it would naturally help us to know what the German view was as to a satisfactory settlement. Political Director said that he could not possibly say anything before the Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs returned from Rome. I told him I did not expect we should have an answer and that I would be grateful if he would arrange for me to see Herr von Ribbentrop as soon as possible after his return but that he himself could help by giving good advice to his two superiors. I pointed out that this question afforded an opportunity for our two Governments to work together for once in the sense of peaceful solutions peacefully negotiated and that if we succeeded in doing so this might help in other matters.

Political Director asked me if French Government were similarly giving good advice and I told him they were.

Repeated to Prague, Paris and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> No. 173.

No. 188

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 7)*  
*No. 111 Telegraphic [C 4010/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 7, 1938

My telegram No. 110.<sup>1</sup>

I am to see Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon at 4 and French Minister will see His Excellency at 5.

From material set forth in your telegram No. 68<sup>2</sup> I have prepared for my interview full notes which I have shown to my French colleague and discussed with him. In accordance with . . .<sup>3</sup> he will urge Czechoslovak Government to go to the utmost limit compatible with maintenance of their national integrity. He will inform them that everything they can do will be an important contribution to work of appeasement undertaken by French and British Governments. In further conversation he will perhaps add, as from himself, that in view of French Government the situation is extremely serious.

I have told my French colleague that publicity which has been given in Czech press to anti-Henlein demonstrations in Sudeten area on May 1 is in my opinion foolish and provocative (see my telegram No. 105 Saving).<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Paris, Berlin and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 177, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> No. 171.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

No. 189

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8)*  
*No. 441 Telegraphic [C 4033/1941/18]*

ROME, May 7, 1938

I saw Count Ciano this evening. Apologising for asking for an interview at a time when he must be very busy, I said that my Government were anxious that he should learn at the earliest possible moment of certain steps which we and the French Government were taking in Prague and which we were taking alone in Berlin about Czechoslovakia.

I then gave him to read and left with him a paper based on paragraph 1 of your telegram to Berlin No. 142,<sup>1</sup> on paragraphs 6-9 inclusive and 12 of your telegram to Prague No. 68<sup>2</sup> and of paragraphs 3 and 4 of your telegram No. 139<sup>3</sup> to Berlin. I am sending a copy<sup>4</sup> of actual text of paper to Sir A. Cadogan by bag tonight.

The Minister who said that he was completely exhausted and looked it thanked me for the communication. He did not make any comment on it but remarked that he was not greatly troubled by Czechoslovakian question. I observed that my Government considered this matter of the greatest importance for European peace.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of May 4 contained a summary of the conversation reported more fully in No. 169.

<sup>2</sup> No. 171.

<sup>3</sup> No. 173.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

Count Ciano leaves tomorrow night for [? Florence] and will not be back at work till Tuesday or Wednesday. I hope to see him again on one of those days.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

#### No. 190

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8)*

*No. 182 Telegraphic [C 4036/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 8, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Czechoslovak Minister called on me yesterday after my interview with Political Director and I informed him in general terms of action which I had taken adding that I had expressed earnest hope that the German Government will similarly use their influence. Czechoslovak Minister is leaving for Prague to-day (and will<sup>2</sup>) lunch with M. Benes on Monday. He has always shewn himself extremely reasonable. He asked me my personal opinion. I told him that provided (? he understood)<sup>2</sup> it as entirely personal it was as follows: that the President M. Benes should lose no time in publicly announcing that he was inviting Henlein to discuss direct a settlement of question on basis of a state of nationalities. It was a case of now or never and would have been better a year ago or before Henlein's Carlsbad speech. It was not that I believed Herr Hitler desired or was ready for forcible action at this stage but because I feared that in present state of exaltation of both . . .<sup>3</sup> Herr Henlein's hand might be forced at any moment by provocative action on one side or the other of the frontier.

Czechoslovak Minister said that he was and had long been entirely of this opinion himself but that it would help him if he could mention this to the President as coming from myself. I said that he could do so on conditions mentioned above.

Repeated to Paris, Rome and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 187.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> The text here may read 'parties' or 'countries'.

#### No. 191

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 5.0 p.m.)*

*No. 114 Telegraphic [C 4039/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 8, 1938, 3.0 p.m.

From my immediately preceding telegram<sup>1</sup> it will be seen that Minister for Foreign Affairs was not too encouraging in his immediate reaction.

While very friendly and sometimes indiscreetly frank he is liable to be a little wooden or academic in his outlook. It is perhaps just as well that he

<sup>1</sup> This telegram and No. 192 were despatched in reverse order.

personally is likely to be less concerned with internal treatment of this question than the Prime Minister and the President, M. Benes, whom I will try to see early in the coming week. On the one hand I believe the Prime Minister<sup>2</sup> can be trusted to make a faithful record of what is said to him and to report it to the Government.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Geneva, Rome and Berlin Saving.

<sup>2</sup> It is probable that these words should read 'On the other hand I believe the Minister for Foreign Affairs'.

## No. 192

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 6.45 p.m.)*

*No. 113 Telegraphic [C 4035/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 8, 1938, 3.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 68<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 111.<sup>2</sup>

During the interview which lasted [? half an] hour I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs on the lines indicated while His Excellency took notes. A full record of my statement will be sent by bag leaving May 10.

Minister for Foreign Affairs was prepared for the gravity of my representations by reports already received from Czechoslovak Minister in London but having only just returned from Roumania he could not express more than a preliminary and personal opinion on my communication until he had been able to consult his colleagues.

He expressed his gratitude for the interest displayed by His Majesty's Government, admitted difficulties and dangers of situation, but thought His Majesty's Government took too black a view of the military prospect. He appreciated that His Majesty's Government could not commit themselves further than in Prime Minister's speech of March 24 and that this must not be given too large an interpretation.

As regards practical conclusions Minister for Foreign Affairs said that his Government would do what they could but he indicated that we might underestimate difficulties. He begged that we would do nothing to raise pretensions of Henlein party and in particular that we would not insist on any public admission that Czechoslovakia was a State of nationalities. Czech public would find it hard to stomach and Henlein party would become more difficult than ever. As it was that party wished to pursue a policy which could hardly be reconciled with democratic principles especially in their attitude towards the Jews and so-called Marxists.

While reaffirming that he was only giving his first impressions the Minister for Foreign Affairs admitted that he was not very optimistic. He evidently feared that Henlein party would prove insatiable and end by making such demands as would involve complete capitulation. I suggested that these were gloomy speculations and that immediate task was to get down to serious

<sup>1</sup> No. 171.

<sup>2</sup> No. 188.



discussions round a conference table and see whether Henlein party were in fact unreasonable and if so in what respects.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs said that conversations were proceeding all the time and I urged that Czechoslovak Government should make it clear that they for their part desired to enter upon serious negotiations without further delay.<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion I told Minister for Foreign Affairs that I proposed to repeat substance of my remarks also to President and Prime Minister who would perhaps by then be able to give me some more precise indication of intentions of the Government.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin and Rome.

<sup>3</sup> On May 9 Mr. Newton telegraphed in the following terms the text of an official communiqué which was published in the press of May 8: 'Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Kamil Krofta, received yesterday afternoon British Minister at Prague, Mr. B. C. Newton, who assured Minister of British Government's friendly interest and readiness to help Czechoslovak Government in their efforts to solve German question in Czechoslovakia by fulfilment of the reasonable demands of German population in spirit of Mr. Chamberlain's declaration of March 24. French Minister, M. Delacroix, made similar representations to Dr. Krofta and in name of his Government advocated such solution of German question in Czechoslovakia as would be compatible with integrity of State. The two Ministers expressed expectation of their Governments that Czechoslovak Government would within framework indicated go to furthest possible limits for settlement of this question.'

#### No. 193

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 151 Telegraphic [C 4011/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1938

Your telegram No. 181<sup>1</sup>.

When you see Herr von Ribbentrop it would be better to refrain from giving any interpretation, even personally and confidentially, of the meaning we might attach to the 'comprehensive settlement' which we are pressing the Czechoslovak Government to adopt. Please see in this connexion paragraph 8 of my telegram No. 138.<sup>2</sup>

There was no harm at all in your stating a personal view on this point to the Czechoslovak Minister, as reported in your telegram No. 182<sup>3</sup>, but it is not desirable that the German Government should be in a position to make public, at the present stage at any rate, that His Majesty's Government favour a settlement on the basis of 'a state of nationalities rather than of a national state', particularly in view of the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister's request to His Majesty's Minister that we should not insist on any public admission that Czechoslovakia was a state of nationalities.

As regards the proposed warning to Germany, you will have noted from my telegram No. 145<sup>4</sup> that we had contemplated that this should be reserved for a possible further stage in the conversations. Please bear this in mind when you speak to Herr von Ribbentrop.

Repeated to Geneva, Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 187.

<sup>2</sup> No. 172.

<sup>3</sup> No. 190.

<sup>4</sup> No. 180.

No. 194

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10)*  
*No. 183 Telegraphic [C 4096/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 9, 1938

Prague telegram No. 113.<sup>1</sup>

If attitude of Minister for Foreign Affairs represents that of Czechoslovak Government outlook for European peace is indeed gloomy. A high official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs speaking with great frankness to a member of my staff to-day made the following points:—

(1) Attitude of Chancellor will largely depend on mood in which he returns from Rome and on degree of support promised by Mussolini. Ministry of Foreign Affairs have not yet received a word from Rome.

(2) German Ambassador in Paris reports that he believes that if Czechoslovakia is attacked France will march.

(3) Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not believe Russia will intervene except possibly with aircraft and technical assistance.

(4) They do not expect Italy to intervene unless there is a general conflagration and then only at a later stage.

(5) They reckon that if Germany marches into Czechoslovakia, Poland will follow suit, a displeasing but inevitable contingency.

(6) They doubt if Little Entente will really carry out their treaty obligations in the event of Hungary attacking Czechoslovakia but they admitted the possibility.

(7) They recognise that if France is involved it will be difficult for England to keep out.

To sum up, official admits that there is a nasty possibility of another world war. He expressed the opinion that crisis would come very soon one way or the other. He added that Ministry of Foreign Affairs had taken note of my statement to the Political Director reported in penultimate sentence of my telegram No. 181<sup>2</sup> and gave impression that they would like to follow this up. Everything would have to wait of course till after Hitler's return to-morrow night.

Repeated to Geneva, Prague, Rome and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 192.

<sup>2</sup> No. 187.

No. 195

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*  
*No. 150 [C 4213/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 9, 1938

My Lord,

With reference to your telegram No. 68<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 113<sup>2</sup> and other recent telegraphic correspondence regarding the dangers of the Sudetic

<sup>1</sup> No. 171.

<sup>2</sup> No. 192.

German question, I have the honour to inform you that I called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 7th to make the representations decided upon by His Majesty's Government as a sequel to the meeting between British and French Ministers in London on the 28th and 29th April.

2. In excusing myself for seeking so important an interview on the very day of His Excellency's return from the Little Entente Conference at Sinaia I explained that I had in fact been instructed to act on or before the previous day; I had however been authorised to defer my action because, as I thought His Excellency would agree, it seemed preferable that I should make my representations to him as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the first place. Dr. Krofta expressed his appreciation of this attitude, and assured me that he felt himself quite fresh and prepared for what he had smilingly described when I first entered the room as an historic interview.

3. From message received from the Czechoslovak Minister in London he would, I suggested, perhaps already be aware to some extent of what I was going to say. But to assist His Excellency in following the rather lengthy statement which I was about to make I explained that it could roughly be divided into four sections. The first set forth the view taken by His Majesty's Government of the dangers arising out of the Sudetic question, the second dealt with the military situation, the third with the position of His Majesty's Government, and the fourth drew conclusions as to the practical action which ought immediately to be taken.

4. Beginning now with the first section, I said that His Majesty's Government had been considering the present situation in Czechoslovakia and had come to the conclusion that it was one of great danger, primarily for Czechoslovakia herself but also for the peace of the world. The incorporation of Austria in the German Reich had had a powerful influence upon the Sudetic Germans in Czechoslovakia, who were evidently uniting more completely than ever before under the leadership of Herr Henlein. The absorption of Austria had put them into a condition of great exaltation and although this might outwardly have subsided, inwardly it doubtless continued and great tension and excitement remained in existence. The Sudetic Germans had been given stronger confidence in themselves and also in the help which they believed they could now expect from Greater Germany, so that they were becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy. On the other side of the frontier feelings of great excitement and enthusiasm had also been produced. To use an electrical simile, a body in Czechoslovakia already strongly susceptible to the magnetism of the Reich had now been much more highly charged, while the German magnet itself had become both more highly magnetised and larger, so that the force of mutual attraction had greatly increased. Or, to use other similes, the dramatic success of the action of the Reich in Austria had generated a momentum which might well carry away the German Government, or the National Socialist party, to further action which might jeopardise the peace of the world to a far greater extent than Austria. A train of combustible material was in existence and might be ignited by a single violent incident in the Sudetic area to start an outbreak which might

end in war. In this highly dangerous situation I felt sure His Excellency would agree with my Government in thinking that every possible step must be taken to avoid an outbreak with such risks for Czechoslovakia and the peace of the world.

5. Proceeding to the second section of my statement I said that in view of these grave dangers and in case the worst should come to the worst, my Government had been considering what the military situation would be, firstly for Czechoslovakia in the case of a German attack, secondly for France if in consequence of this attack she decided to support Czechoslovakia, and thirdly for Great Britain in case as a further consequence the British Government might also subsequently become involved at any stage. The result of an examination which had been conducted by our General Staff showed how very difficult it would be to defend Czechoslovakia and that this difficulty would increase as Germany made progress with the re-fortification of the Rhineland. In particular, the military position of Czechoslovakia had been seriously weakened by the incorporation of Austria in the Reich and by the lack of adequate fortifications along the frontier with what used to be Austria. (It will be noticed that in the preceding sentence I refrained from going to the full length of the material which I was authorised to use. I selected the wording given because I was sure that the Czechoslovak Government would not admit that there was such an absence of fortifications as laid 'the heart of Czechoslovakia open to German attack'. The Czechoslovak view has been, moreover, confirmed by the reports which I have forwarded to you of an inspection made by the Military Attaché to this Legation.) I continued this section of my statement by observing that it seemed doubtful for various reasons whether Russia could render much assistance if indeed any, while the attitude of Poland seemed unhappily very uncertain, so that it would not be possible to rely on any help from there. To sum up, the conclusion reached by my Government was that there was little hope that France and the Soviet Union could prevent the military occupation of Czechoslovakia by Germany. The restoration of Czechoslovakia would therefore, we believed, have to await the conclusion of a victorious war by the Powers which had come to her assistance. Such a war would probably last a long time and if the British Government were to take part at any stage they could not at first contribute such forces as would secure an early victory. To begin with their chief contribution would only be economic pressure exercised through sea power, which, as was well known, was only slow in its operation. If finally victory were achieved it must not be forgotten that the question would still have to be decided whether the Czechoslovak State could be re-established in its present form.

6. In answer to the above it might, I knew, be argued that if a sufficiently strong attitude were to be adopted towards Germany she would not dare to risk action which might lead to war. Such an attitude would be, however, what was called in English 'bluff'. We could not be certain that it would be successful and unless there were certainty we had to be prepared to face not of course merely the risk, but the actuality, of war. Even if the British

Government for their part were so disposed, public opinion in Great Britain would not tolerate a gamble in such a matter. Only in the very last resort would the British Government ever go to war and the risk of war was not one which they could accept by indulging in a policy of gambling or bluff. (I felt that the remarks in this paragraph were covered by your instructions and that it was desirable to make them because it is not uncommon for Czechs to take the line that Germany would never venture on war if she knew in advance that France, Great Britain and Russia would come to the aid of Czechoslovakia. President Benes, for example, spoke somewhat in this sense shortly after the German occupation of Austria to Mr. Leo Kennedy and to myself—see my telegram No. 33<sup>3</sup> of March 17th and my Savingram No. 31 of March 21st.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in the course of an informal conversation with the Chief of the General Staff on May 5th General Krejci observed to me that, while in some respects the situation seemed similar to that in 1914, he thought it vastly more favourable for the former Allies than then. On the one side there was only Germany, whereas on the other side France was much stronger than in 1914, so was Great Britain and so, he believed, was Russia, while instead of Serbia, we should have the assistance of Czechoslovakia with a well equipped, organised and comparatively large army and air force. I need hardly say that so far as the occasion permitted I pointed out to the General that undue optimism would, in my opinion, be very unwise.)

7. Continuing with this part of my remarks, I informed Dr. Krofta that His Majesty's Government had carefully considered their position and regretted that for their part they could not contemplate going further than they had already done in the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons on March 24th. I reminded him, moreover, of what I had said to the President on April 22nd and repeated to himself on April 26th, to the effect that Mr. Chamberlain's carefully chosen words meant nothing more than they actually said and that it would be unwise and dangerous to give too broad an interpretation to his statement.

8. Over and above the very serious military considerations to which I had alluded remained the possibility of the exercise by Germany of an irresistible economic pressure. Not only was the actual trade conducted by Czechoslovakia with Greater Germany very important, constituting a high proportion of her total export trade, but Germany now controlled (I used the word 'beherrscht') Czechoslovakia's main trade communications with the outside world. Even, therefore, if it were possible to do anything more to remedy the weakness of Czechoslovakia's military position, the result might only be to stimulate Germany to organise and apply economic pressure for the achievement of her purposes.

9. I made it clear that it was only with much regret that I was setting forth this depressing review of the situation as it presented itself to His Majesty's Government and that nothing of the sort would be said in any

<sup>3</sup> See No. 101, note 2.

<sup>4</sup> No. 101.



quarter where it might be embarrassing for the Czechoslovak Government, though of course in such quarters similar conclusions might already have been reached. My review was only made because the time had come when all the facts must be faced, however unpleasant they might be. The object of my Government was not to discourage the Government of Czechoslovakia but to prove to them beyond any possible doubt or hesitation the absolute necessity of a supreme effort to remove the dangers in the situation and to reach a settlement with the Sudetic German party in the interests of Czechoslovakia's existence as well as of the peace of Europe.

10. Negotiations ought, it seemed to His Majesty's Government, to be pursued at the earliest possible moment and it had been noted in London with regret and apprehension that he, Dr. Krofta, and also Dr. Hodza had expressed to me on April 26th<sup>5</sup> the fear that serious negotiations might not be possible until after the communal elections, that is to say, until next month. His Majesty's Secretary of State feared that such a delay might be dangerous. It would, moreover, be the more disappointing because the President had told me, it is true, on April 22nd just before the Carlsbad speeches, that he hoped it would be possible to press on with negotiations during the present month and to use the month of June and also, if necessary, part of July for the enactment of the necessary legislation.

11. My Government considered that the negotiations should cover the whole field of the problem and have as their object a comprehensive and lasting settlement. They believed that this settlement would require a broader foundation than had hitherto been contemplated. I then narrated the relevant part of my audience with President Benes of April 22nd<sup>6</sup> and said that the British Government had noted with particular interest what the President had said to me to the effect that he personally was of the opinion that Czechoslovakia could not be a national State and furthermore that so far as the Czechoslovak Government was concerned it was realised that the programme already contemplated meant an end of such a conception of the State. In the opinion of my Government this remark showed that the President had resolved to tackle the problem in a realist spirit and they hoped that it would be possible to achieve progress by starting from the conception of a 'State of Nationalities'.

12. On the proposals which the Czechoslovak Government had been good enough to communicate to them recently my Government found it difficult to express an opinion until it could be seen how far these measures would in fact advance the cause of a real settlement, that is to say, how they would be received by the Henlein party.

13. To judge by the speeches made at Carlsbad<sup>7</sup> by Herr Henlein and other members of his party and the comments which His Excellency had been good enough to make briefly during our conversation on April 26th, it looked as though there were a great gulf to be bridged. My Government believed therefore that the Czechoslovak Government still had a good way

<sup>5</sup> Nos. 158 and 161.

<sup>6</sup> Nos. 154 and 156.

<sup>7</sup> See No. 157.

to go before they could hope to find the basis for a real solution. Their present proposals did not seem to represent a great advance towards that State of Nationalities which President Benes appeared to have in mind.

14. In conclusion, I said that if the Czechoslovak Government would keep my Government informed of developments, His Majesty's Government would be ready at any appropriate time and in any appropriate manner to use their influence to assist in securing a settlement. I was furthermore authorised to inform His Excellency that the British Government proposed to make clear to the German Government the keen interest which they took in this question and their desire to help in promoting a peaceful and equitable settlement. My Government had, however, little hope of success in any action they might take in Berlin unless the Czechoslovak Government could show that they were resolved to make an effort which would in fact be very serious.

15. Dr. Krofta made notes and I spoke slowly in German, repeating my remarks whenever necessary. At the end I offered to go over my statement again but he assured me that it was already sufficiently clear in his mind. He said he accepted the substantial accuracy of my survey, though he thought that the military situation was painted too black, and he was also incautious enough to indicate, I think unintentionally, that the gravity of the view taken might be influenced by a desire to lend weight to the representations. I warned him, therefore, that my words had not been lightly uttered but expressed considered views arrived at by His Majesty's Government after a careful examination of the situation. I have already reported on Dr. Krofta's first reaction in my telegram No. 113.<sup>8</sup> In slight amplification I might say that he complained that the Sudetic Germans, who had been accustomed to being masters in this country, would never be content until they had regained that position. I suggested that if this were so it might almost be an added reason for providing the safeguards which the Sudetic Germans were demanding because the Czechs would thus automatically safeguard their own future position. Dr. Krofta said he did not think it would work out that way and he did not believe that the Germans would ever be content with anything less than their former privileged condition. He showed too that the possibility of any reconstruction of the Constitution went beyond his range of vision.

16. As mentioned in my telegram No. 114<sup>9</sup> Dr. Krofta has many valuable and admirable qualities but I doubt whether they include the rare gifts of political vision or of constructive and adaptable statesmanship. He will, however, doubtless faithfully report my representations to President Benes and to the rest of the Government. The President of the Council, Dr. Hodza, is much more receptive and conciliatory, but doubts are sometimes expressed whether the impressions which can more easily be made upon him are very lasting or effective. President Benes, whose qualities will of course be familiar to you, is probably still the most important political personality in this

<sup>8</sup> No. 192.

<sup>9</sup> No. 191.

country even though the failure of his post-war policy, while it may be through no fault of his own, must have shaken his position to some extent.

17. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris, Rome and Berlin.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

No. 196

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*

*No. 470 [C 4220/1941/18]*

His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin presents his compliments to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned memorandum by the Military Attaché, dated 9th May, 1938.

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *May 10, 1938*

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 196

BERLIN, *May 9, 1938*

*Czech Military Confidence*

In conversation with my French and Czech colleagues here, and from information received from other sources, I have been impressed by the confidence which seems to exist in Czech, and to a certain extent in French circles, that the Czech Army will be able to resist any possible German offensive against Czecho-Slovakia [*sic*], so long as the French intervene actively as soon as war should occur.

2. I would hesitate to state categorically that this confidence is misplaced. I am however extremely doubtful whether in fact the Czechs would be able to resist a German offensive, and am of opinion that this Czech confidence is largely artificial, and designed both to bolster up morale, and to induce the French, and possibly ourselves, to think in terms of the possibility of successful preventive hostilities more seriously than we might otherwise do.

3. Admittedly the German Army is still very far short of completing its organisation and armament. Admittedly, too, the Czech defences have a considerable value and may be relied upon to play an important role. On the other hand the German soldier is still the German soldier, and the Czech the Czech. The hostile Sudeten population will give the Czechs considerable trouble. Poland and Hungary may quite conceivably march if Germany marches. Numerically, even with a hostile France, the Germans will be able to put a much larger Army and Air Force into the field against the Czechs, than the latter will be able to produce. Presumably the French can only attack on land in the Mosel-Palatinate area, or possibly in the Black Forest. The Germans may well prove to be capable of holding their own on the

defensive in these areas, with comparatively small forces, long enough to ensure the rapid overthrow of the Czechs.

4. I feel that both the French and ourselves should be very careful about accepting Czech opinion on the subject of their ability to withstand German attack. It would in my opinion be most dangerous to embark on hostilities on the assumption that the Czechs would be certain to hold up the Germans completely or even for a very considerable time. As far as I can judge the Czechs have done exactly what I deprecated so strongly in submitting my reports on the recent German advance into Austria. They have not only drawn sweeping and false deductions from an operation which was abnormal in many important respects, but they have greatly exaggerated the various shortcomings and faults manifested by the German Army on that occasion.

5. That the Czechs should have gained sufficient encouragement from the German operation in Austria to induce a feeling of confidence is in some respects most satisfactory. But that this confidence should cause them to feel that they can deny a minimum of reasonable concessions to the Sudeten, or that this confidence should lead the French or ourselves into a false appreciation of the military situation is in many respects definitely dangerous.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE, *Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché*

#### No. 197

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 81 Telegraphic [C 4072/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1938*

Reaction of Minister for Foreign Affairs to your representations, as reported in your telegram No. 113<sup>1</sup> is disappointing. I feel sure that when you see the Prime Minister and President you will do your best to make them realise the gravity of the position and the responsibility which rests upon them.

My disappointment is increased by the complacent tone adopted by the Czechoslovak press in commenting upon the British and French representations, as reported in your telegram No. 116.<sup>2</sup> Process of education which President Benes has told you the Czech public and political parties require does not seem to have gone very far as yet.

I am also disturbed by the terms of the communiqué published in the press of May 8, as reported in your telegram No. 115.<sup>3</sup> The first paragraph of that communiqué seems to me to misrepresent the sense of your *démarche*, and it is to be hoped that you might use your influence in the drafting of any further statement in order to prevent incorrect impression being given.

You should speak in the sense of the present telegram when you see the Prime Minister and President Benes.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. See No. 192, note 3.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 184 Telegraphic [C 4140/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 10, 1938

Your telegram No. 151.<sup>1</sup>

I submit that the effect of any representation which I may make to German Government will be greatly diminished if I am not authorised to have a certain latitude in expression of personal opinion.

If I am asked by Herr von Ribbentrop, as I was by Political Director, what His Majesty's Government regard as a 'comprehensive settlement' I cannot, if any useful purpose is to be served, well say less than I said to Political Director. I made it clear to the latter that His Majesty's Government were making no concrete suggestions and merely added personally and confidentially that basis of a State of Nationalities would be kind of line which His Majesty's Government would regard as 'comprehensive'. That constitutes in my opinion minimum which can be said if German Government is to have any confidence at all in good faith of His Majesty's Government or their real desire to seek peaceful solution.

Benes himself has already alluded to the point of nationalities, and a peaceful solution on any other lines is absolutely excluded, nor could it serve any purpose for His Majesty's Government to recommend any other. If I cannot speak personally and confidentially, i.e. in a manner which does not justify German Government in making public statements on the subject, which they have not so far done, it will be difficult to convince them that we are not, as many here believe, merely playing for time till we are militarily better prepared for war. I understand anxieties of Czechoslovak Government, but latter's remedy is for themselves to announce without delay their decision to work on basis of State of Nationalities. Unfortunately all information which I have here tends on the other hand to indicate that M. Benes is not fully alive to the realities of the situation, and is counting not only on France, but on Britain to save him from swallowing a disagreeable pill, which is only hope for peace without humiliation. If Germany is not to be allowed to settle everything in her own way by surgical operations we must [? have the courage] to insist for once on a drastic medical remedy by diplomatic action.

In the same way if I am referring in conversations to dangers of situation I cannot well refrain from reference to Prime Minister's speech of 24th March. Germans have it very much in their own minds and it constitutes main justification for British intervention and our chief claim for acceptance by Germany of our moderating advice. Moreover when, if I have to do so, I give the official warning you contemplate it will, while necessary as a firm expression of the intention of His Majesty's Government to go to war in certain circumstances, have been largely discounted beforehand since it is not new, and has already been seriously taken to heart. I read my telegram No. 181<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 193.

<sup>2</sup> No. 187.



to French Ambassador here who concurred wholeheartedly in its terms and said that he would be guided by it. His only comment was that it was time Europe revised its opinion of M. Benes. In my opinion it is essential latter should be told quite firmly what he must do.

Repeated to Rome, Paris, Prague, Geneva.

### No. 199

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11)*

*No. 442 Telegraphic [C 4141/1941/18]*

ROME, May 10, 1938

The Polish Ambassador asked whether he could be received by Herr Hitler, whom he knew well in Berlin, during latter's visit to Rome.

2. An interview was arranged and Ambassador told me this evening that talk had mainly turned on Poland and Herr Hitler had said that he desired to prolong present Polish-German [?Pact] after the ten years for which it had originally been made had expired. He remarked that of course it pained him to see a large number of Germans outside the Reich but he had to balance this question with that of peace or war. He did not want war because he had come to conclusion that result would be a triumph for communism, first in the defeated nations and later in those which were victorious.

3. Herr Hitler then spoke of France and said that he wished for nothing from France. He had made various advances but French would not believe they were genuine. He was still however anxious to make friends. Incidentally, he said confidentially to Ambassador that inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine when they were under German rule indulged in French propaganda, and when they were under French rule in German propaganda. He did not therefore care much about them.

4. He then spoke about Italy and told Ambassador that he was going to give Italy formal and definite assurances about the Brenner frontier (see my telegram No. 82 Saving).<sup>1</sup>

5. I asked Ambassador if Herr Hitler had discussed Czechoslovakia. The Ambassador said that he had not mentioned the country. Unfortunately just as he was on the point of putting Herr Hitler a question on the subject the Chef de Cabinet came in and conversation ended. The Ambassador expressed his personal view that if Herr Hitler believed war would result from his action in Czechoslovakia he would be very prudent and prefer a friendly settlement, but of course everything depended on the manner in which Czechoslovak Government treated the problem. He personally doubted whether that Government had yet realised the gravity of the situation. They seemed inclined to take view that Germans were only using a threat which would not materialise.

Repeated to Geneva, Paris, Berlin, Warsaw and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*  
*No. 151 [C 4204/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 10, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that I have received a letter, dated the 3rd May, from Herr Karl Frank, Herr Henlein's deputy, drawing a picture for my benefit of the present situation with regard to the Sudeten German question. The facts presented therein had, he stated, also been brought to the notice of Dr. Hodza. His object in bringing them to my notice was that I should be aware, now that the Sudeten German problem had become an international one, that the Sudeten German party wished for a fundamental solution of the question, both in harmony with Sudeten German interests and also in a manner which could be accepted by the Government and the Czech people. There could, however, be no hope of agreement unless the conversations were conducted in the right atmosphere, and that atmosphere could only be obtained if the Czech officials in the German area ceased from defaming, persecuting and punishing members of the party for their membership of it and for their 'Weltanschauung'.

2. In the first enclosure to the letter, called a situation report, it is stated that, before the Karlsbad meeting, conversations had taken place between Dr. Hodza and the party's representatives, when Dr. Hodza had promised to take three steps to improve the atmosphere. These were: (1) a comprehensive political amnesty; (2) the holding before the summer vacation of all communal elections due; and (3) that an end should be put to every form of defamation or injurious action of a legal as well as social nature.

3. An amnesty had, indeed, been declared which appeared to be one of the most comprehensive yet made by the State. On the other hand, nothing had been done to put an end to the system which had rendered the amnesty necessary; for example, Germans were still not admitted to the panel of lawyers authorised to conduct the defence in cases of military treason. Moreover, the amnesty had not covered those German officials and others who had since 1931 been subjected on political grounds to disciplinary measures, such as cuts in salary, stoppage of promotion.

4. It was the fact, too, that in the last few days Sudeten Germans were being increasingly persecuted for their membership of the party, their 'Weltanschauung', and their use of the German greeting. Yet Dr. Hodza had been informed before the Karlsbad meeting that it was intended there to announce the party's profession of national socialism, to which Dr. Hodza had replied that there was place for such a creed within the Constitution, and that the conversations would not be interrupted as a result. But the persecutions which had since followed were not only incompatible with fundamental civil rights, but were a hindrance to the continuation of the conversations.

5. Further, there was reason to fear that the promised communal elections

would not be carried out to their full extent (see my Savingram No. 1118).<sup>1</sup> This could not improve the atmosphere, any more than could the restrictions imposed on freedom of speech at election meetings and the continued prohibition of public meetings (the report was, of course, written before the prohibition was withdrawn).

6. A separate enclosure was added describing the incidents at Troppau on the 30th April and the 1st May (see my Savingram No. 98).<sup>1</sup> They were said to show that the Sudeten party's officials and members were well under discipline, whereas the Czech police and population were not, and that the army had so far forgotten its neutrality as to egg on the Czech demonstrators.

7. The conclusion was that unless the culprits were sternly punished and steps taken to prevent the recurrence of such acts, the Sudeten Germans would not continue the conversations with the Government.

8. I find it hard to judge what truth there is in the allegations of Czech provocation against the Sudeten German population. It will have been observed from my recent Saving telegrams that the 'Zeit' suddenly opened a campaign on the subject on the 5th May and has continued it daily ever since. The fact that the 'Zeit' found it necessary on the first day to rake up an incident of minor importance which had occurred nearly two months before, gave the impression that the paper was acting on a 'mot d'ordre'. It is instructive to observe, too, that the same tales are now being spread not only by the Sudeten German party itself, but by such allies and associates as the German Minister and members of the old aristocracy. I fear that the Germans are all too human in regarding as provocation what is merely resistance to provocation on their own side, and I learn from a member of my staff, who paid a visit to the Marienbad district last week-end, that the attitude of the German population there is distinctly provocative. The young men are marching about in uniforms and ostentatiously giving each other (as well as anyone who looks like a foreigner) the Hitler salute. It is no wonder then that the Czech residents are provoked.

9. It is obvious that in such an atmosphere a really serious incident may occur, and Herr Hitler, if only for reasons of prestige, may feel suddenly inspired to 'act like lightning'.

10. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)

No. 152 [C 4197/1941/18]

PRAGUE, May 10, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform you that my German colleague called on me yesterday to discuss the Sudeten German question and, in particular, to make enquiries about the Anglo-French *démarche*.

2. Without, of course, saying anything of the analysis of the situation contained in my statement to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I told the German Minister that my representations had been in line with the course which His Majesty's Government had consistently pursued in this question; that is to say, that I had urged upon the Government that they should make every effort to reach a reasonable, comprehensive and definite settlement with the Sudeten German party. Dr. Eisenlohr referred to the call made by His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin on the Political Director in the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He understood that Sir Neville Henderson had not made a *démarche*, nor, I gathered, in Dr. Eisenlohr's opinion, would anything in the nature of a *démarche* have been acceptable, but the purpose of his visit had been to inform the German Government of the British intervention at Prague. Dr. Eisenlohr believed that, in particular, Sir Neville Henderson had referred to the question of a State of Nationalities. I informed him that it was true that His Majesty's Government had some sympathy with the view that Czechoslovakia should regard itself as a State of Nationalities, but I could only tell him this in strict confidence, as in putting forward such a conception much tact and reserve were required. Moreover, everything depended on the practical interpretation given to a term which could obviously be developed to a point where it would be equivalent to the disruption of the State.

3. The German Minister seemed more curious as to the attitude of the French Government than as to that of His Majesty's Government. I referred him to the communiqué, with its frank revelation that the French Government favoured as far-reaching a solution as would be compatible with the integrity of the State. As he expressed some scepticism in regard to the sincerity of their interest, I told him that, in my opinion, ever since the visit of M. Delbos the French Government had shown an ever-growing concern in regard to the Sudeten question.

4. My German colleague then alluded to the numerous incidents in the German area and to the provocative attitude of the Czech population and to the support of that attitude by the police, and even by officers and soldiers, the actions of the latter being taken perhaps in a private capacity, but not being discouraged by the authorities. I said that I was interested to hear his view because my own impression had been that there must be mischief-makers about, and I found it hard to believe that the Czechs for their part could be so foolish as deliberately to foment trouble. Dr. Eisenlohr, however,

maintained his attitude, which, it will be noticed, is in line with that taken by Herr Frank, of the Sudeten German party, in a letter to me, on which I am reporting by this bag in my despatch No. 151.<sup>1</sup> The German Minister told me that he did not bring to the notice of his Government individual incidents, but only the general trend, and that, apart from information received from the Sudeten German party, he had his own observers in those areas. His information was that the German elements had been very excited at the time of what he termed the Austrian 'Anschluss', but that he had had no further anxiety on their account since the date of Herr Hitler's birthday. On the other hand, the instructions which had, he admitted, been given to the police to proceed with the utmost circumspection were no longer being followed and the Czech population was becoming increasingly provocative in its attitude. The Sudeten German party had issued an appeal to its members for discipline and orderly behaviour, and Dr. Eisenlohr felt that the smaller Czech parties concerned ought to do the same. I asked whether such suggestions had not been made direct to the Prime Minister or the Minister of the Interior, both of whom were, I understood, in direct touch with the Sudeten German leaders. I gathered that they had been made, but Dr. Eisenlohr showed that he would welcome some allusion to the matter on my part, and to this, indeed, I see no objection should a suitable opportunity present itself when I next see Dr. Hodza.

5. The German Minister maintained that recent persecution and pin-pricks had produced such an atmosphere as to make it impossible for the Sudeten German leaders to enter into serious negotiations. I retorted that this seemed to me an extremely false and foolish attitude, seeing that the production of the atmosphere to which he referred showed, on the contrary, how important it was that no further time should be lost in getting down to serious negotiations and, by the very fact of doing so, helping to disperse the atmosphere of which complaint was made. I was the more disappointed at the adoption of the attitude to which he referred, seeing that in my representations I had mentioned your Lordship's view that the Czechoslovak Government, without waiting for the results of the communal elections, ought to proceed at the earliest possible moment with negotiations. Dr. Eisenlohr seemed pleased by this information, and I can only hope that he will now use his influence to persuade the Sudeten German leaders to get off their high horse and down to business. I pointed out to him that, as the Sudeten German party already expected to make a clean sweep in these elections, I could not see any point in their waiting, as they could hardly feel strengthened by the actual result, even if it came up to their fullest expectations, whereas if it failed to do so, their position later on would, if anything, be weakened.

6. Incidentally, my German colleague said that he had heard of a possibility that the nationalities statute might be put into force without consultation with the Sudeten German party. This would, in his opinion, be a great

<sup>1</sup> No. 200.



mistake, both as a matter of tactics and also practically, since before proceeding with legislation the Government ought to find out by discussion where the shoe pinched most. I replied that I was glad to hear his confirmation of a view which I had already myself expressed, both to Dr. Krofta and to Dr. Hodza. I would take the next opportunity of repeating it and, with his permission, would cite him in support of it. A point to which the German Minister appeared to attach special importance was that of equality in the matter of language. I told him, therefore, that, according to my understanding, this was a matter in which the Czechoslovak Government were prepared to make full concessions.

7. Dr. Eisenlohr confirmed a statement in Herr Frank's above-mentioned letter that the public profession of the National Socialist doctrine by Herr Henlein at Karlsbad was not a surprise for the Czechoslovak Government, having been made after discussion with Dr. Hodza. Herr Henlein's declarations in this and other respects had been necessary because the party would otherwise have demanded a complete 'Anschluss' with the Reich. In the comment broadcast from the Reich the same evening—that is, before any less conciliatory comment could appear in the press—emphasis had been laid on the intention shown by Herr Henlein to negotiate. In speeches some days later Herr Henlein had also made it clear that, if he entered upon negotiations, his intentions would be serious, and not merely to lead up to a rupture.

8. In the course of our conversation I stressed the fact that, in our opinion, the forthcoming negotiations ought to continue until they reached an equitable, comprehensive and final settlement. Dr. Eisenlohr, however, smiled at the word final ('endgültig'), saying that nothing was ever final and that it would be as much as could be expected if a definite instalment of progress was achieved. I observed that it would be difficult to encourage the Czechs to make great efforts if there were no sufficient prospect of a real and definite settlement, if the peace of the country and of Europe would remain liable to shocks and threats, and if there loomed in the background the shadow of the eventual disruption of the State. I am sorry to say, however, that my intuitive impression from his general attitude was that the Sudeten German party might continue indefinitely to extract from the Czechoslovak Government the maximum concessions obtainable under whatever pressure could be applied, and that then, however favourable the position achieved might be, they would feel perfectly free to secede and break up the Czechoslovak Republic if it suited their purpose or that of the German Reich to do so. On the other hand, it could not yet be foreseen whether it might not suit the German purpose better for the Sudeten population to remain, perhaps in some politically advantageous position, within the existing State in order to facilitate the German domination of at least Bohemia and Moravia, if not of Slovakia and Ruthenia.

9. Towards the end of our conversation I took advantage of some turn in it to ask whether, having regard to the composite nature of its population, Dr. Eisenlohr thought that Czechoslovakia should pursue a policy of neutrality. Dr. Eisenlohr was contemplating a map on my wall at the time and said

that, while neutrality might be suitable for a country like Switzerland, it was not possible for a State with the geographical situation and peculiar shape of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was surrounded on three sides by the Reich and had in the past only prospered through the protection of the Reich. When I asked against whom she had been protected, he suggested the Turks, but admitted that, in the absence of such 'protection', she might have been attacked also by Germany. I retorted by enquiring whether he therefore preferred the maintenance of the present situation, to which he replied that the present situation was obviously untenable.

10. In conclusion, I observed that what he had himself told me of the desire of the rank and file of the Sudeten party for an 'Anschluss' and of the pacifying influence which had been exercised by the Reich wireless showed that without the co-operation of his country at some stage a settlement between the parties directly concerned might be unobtainable. A danger which seemed to me inherent in the situation was that, if the efforts which we were making to promote a settlement failed, the very clarification of the issues which we might have obtained would be liable almost inevitably, as it seemed to me, to aggravate the international situation and bring us all nearer to the abyss. On the other hand, if wise statesmanship could bring about an equitable solution, which was what the Chancellor of the Reich had said he desired, the result might be that our two countries would come nearer together.

11. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Berlin and Paris.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

## No. 202

*Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 16)*

*No. 23 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4363/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, May 10, 1938

The Soviet press of May 9 publishes a Tass message from Prague regarding a statement published in the 'Rote Fahne', the official organ of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, in its issue of the 1st May under the heading: 'Thirty thousand Soviet bombers will appear over Berlin on the day when the first German soldier crosses the Czechoslovak frontier.' This statement, it appears, was to the effect that the Komintern wireless station had broadcast a declaration warning the present German Government that if they dared in any way to violate the Czechoslovak frontier, thirty thousand Soviet bombers would immediately appear over Berlin.

The Tass agency appends to this message from their Prague correspondent an explanatory note which declares in the most categorical fashion that the whole statement about the thirty thousand Soviet bombers, and also the assertion that it was broadcast from the Komintern wireless station, is an

invention from start to finish. The note goes on to say that the Komintern station did not broadcast, and could not have broadcast, anything of the kind, and attributes this 'provocative statement' to the IRS wireless station in Rome, which, it states, specialises in anti-Soviet broadcasting of the most varied and fantastic kinds and by which the 'Rote Fahne' has evidently been deceived.

Such evidence of lack of co-ordination between the Kremlin and its *succursale* in Prague is in itself interesting and in the present case also provides a striking illustration of reluctance of Soviet Government to accept even indirect responsibility for too categorical declarations of their readiness to fulfil their treaty obligations.

Repeated to Prague.

### No. 203

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 154 Telegraphic [C 4140/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 11, 1938, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 184.<sup>1</sup>

We had not realised from your telegram No. 181<sup>2</sup> that Political Director had questioned you about meaning which His Majesty's Government attach to a 'comprehensive settlement'. We still, however, think it would be better that you should not, if you can avoid it, go beyond generalities at the present stage of your conversations with the German Government on this subject. It appears unfortunately to be true that the Czechoslovak Government are still not alive to the realities of the situation. But if this is so, it is only by using plain language in Prague, and not by anything we may say in Berlin, that we may hope to remedy the situation. We think, therefore, that when you see Minister for Foreign Affairs it would be better if you were to avoid being drawn by him into any definition of what we are urging on the Czechoslovak Government, and if you were to confine yourself to the general terms used in my telegram No. 138.<sup>3</sup> Thus, if you assure the German Government on behalf of His Majesty's Government that they are actively engaged in urging the Czechoslovak Government 'to go to the limit of concession in an effort to reach a comprehensive and lasting agreement with the Sudeten Germans', we are surely entitled to hope that they will take your word for it. If the Minister for Foreign Affairs should press you for a more definite statement, you had better say that you must enquire of His Majesty's Government what information you can give on this point.

As regards the proposed warning to the German Government I can only say that His Majesty's Government decided after careful consideration that this should be reserved for the second stage, as explained in my telegram No. 145.<sup>4</sup> If, in developing the argument outlined in my telegram No. 138, you wish to allude to the dangers of present situation, would it not suffice to

<sup>1</sup> No. 198.

<sup>2</sup> No. 187.

<sup>3</sup> No. 172.

<sup>4</sup> No. 180.

say, as the Secretary of State did to the German Ambassador on May 3, that it is impossible for us to be disinterested in any issue on which the future of European peace might one day be found to depend, or (as suggested in my telegram No. 145) that we cannot be disinterested in a question that may involve an outbreak of war, with all that it would entail for Europe at large, and not impossibly for ourselves as well?

If, however, there is anything in the Minister for Foreign Affairs' reaction which seems to you to call for a formal and official warning, we think you had better say that you must report to His Majesty's Government for further instructions.

We quite see your difficulties and are sorry to have to limit your discretion in this way, but you will realise the difficulty and delicacy of the operation upon which we have embarked. We should prefer to see the result of one step before committing ourselves to another. We must also continue to draw a clear distinction between the language we use in Prague and the language we use in Berlin. It would tend to defeat our purpose if we informed the Czechoslovak Government of the terms we are employing in Berlin, and it would not be fair to the Czechoslovak Government to let the German Government know the full extent of the advice we are giving in Prague. To take only one example; while we are emphasising in Prague the weakness of the military situation, we hope to make the German Government think long before doing anything likely to break the peace.

Repeated to Geneva, Prague, Paris and Rome.

#### No. 204

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*

*No. 117 Telegraphic [C4191/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 81<sup>1</sup> reached me just before visit to President of the Council on May 11.

After repeating to him the substance of my representations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and reciting almost literally that part of them which contained practical conclusions, I informed Dr. Hodza of Dr. Krofta's first reaction and of your comment thereon. President of the Council replied that as indeed I had pointed out to you Dr. Krofta was not then in a position to express the view of the Government and was only giving his preliminary and personal opinions which did not therefore provide sufficient ground for disappointment which you had expressed.

He personally accepted our *démarche* as a basis for action and his Government had decided really to do everything in their power to ensure appeasement so far as Czechoslovakian policy was concerned. This would mean a new orientation and reorganisation of the administration and full self-administration for Sudeten Germans within the limits of the Constitution. In

<sup>1</sup> No. 197.

reply to a question from me he added that the present Constitution was in his opinion wide enough for this purpose but the integrity of the State must be respected for the sake of his own country and of Europe.

Arising out of second paragraph of your telegram Dr. Hodza said that I would have noticed that the process of education had made considerable progress. I agreed that it had certainly advanced considerably during fourteen months since I had been here but said that I feared that progress had not been rapid enough unless there had been a great change in the last few days. Dr. Hodza assured me that there has been and mentioned in particular that extreme Right party, the party of National Union, who had been making difficulties, now realised that appeasement was essential. President Benes must and would help with parties of the Left—as to which please see President Benes's own remark before the *démarche* as mentioned in the second paragraph of my telegram No. 84.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hodza said that the Social Democrats with whom he was personally on good terms would he knew be helpful despite their dislike of the principles of Henlein Party. I took the opportunity to observe that it seemed very desirable that a settlement of such importance should be made with the concurrence of as many parties as possible to which the collaboration of President Benes and himself would of course greatly contribute.

The rank and file of Henlein Party were, observed Dr. Hodza, very Radical and inclined to ride the high horse. While he could not give exact date when serious negotiations could begin he for his part would invite Henlein's representatives to start them in the course of next week. The communal elections were bound to produce a certain excitement but he entirely agreed with and welcomed my advice to my German colleague that the existence of a highly charged atmosphere was an additional reason for early negotiation. The appeal for order and discipline issued by Henlein Party was, he pointed out, balanced by similar appeal made almost a week ago to Czech parties by the National Council. I took the opportunity to inform Dr. Hodza also, of German Minister's view that it would be a great mistake to impose reform without prior discussion with Henlein Party—see paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of my despatch No. 152<sup>3</sup> on its way by bag.

As regards communal elections themselves Dr. Hodza told me there had been some senators in favour of postponement in certain cases. He could tell me for my confidential information that it had just been decided that 42 per cent. of the German elections<sup>4</sup> would be held in the course of the present month and the remaining 58 per cent. would be completed on June 12 (cf. last paragraph of my Saving telegram No. 116).<sup>5</sup>

In the course of our conversation Dr. Hodza referred to his meeting with Mr. Chamberlain this time last year and asked me to express to the Prime Minister and to yourself his great appreciation of the interest which His Majesty's Government was taking in Czechoslovakia and Central Europe.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin, Rome and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 156.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. in the Sudeten areas.

<sup>3</sup> No. 201.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed.



No. 205

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*  
*No. 118 Telegraphic [C 4195/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 11, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I hope that I was able to use the sense of your telegram No. 81<sup>2</sup> to good effect with the President of the Council but it must be borne in mind that communiqué and also press comments which seem to you deprecatory, present a different aspect in Prague from that which they may present in London.

While His Majesty's Government are carefully and in my humble opinion rightly, limiting their own responsibilities, they are forcing some very unpalatable medicine down the throats of the Czechoslovak Government. The medicine may be absolutely necessary, yet if and when they swallow the dose it can hardly be expected that the Czechoslovak Government will at the same time be willing either publicly to eat humble pie or themselves to proclaim the desperate state of their health. If only for tactical reasons it would be neither reasonable nor desirable that the Czechoslovak Government should make public anything which might embarrass them in their negotiations with the Henlein party.

I myself, although indeed as a means rather of defining limits of our help, suggested to Minister of Foreign Affairs that he would be on safe ground in referring to Mr. Chamberlain's speech of March 24 in communiqué and it ...<sup>3</sup> go very far.

President of the Council told me that he would be prepared to consider some further public statement if you desire it. He obviously however doubted whether it would be opportune and considered process of education could best be completed by discussions within the Cabinet and with political parties. I agree and think we ought to abstain from being drawn into further details than we can help as regards internal methods to be pursued by Czechoslovak Government.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 204.

<sup>2</sup> No. 197.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 206

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*  
*No. 185 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4231/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 12, 1938

I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs last night before the receipt of your telegram No. 154<sup>1</sup> with which however my language yesterday was in com-

<sup>1</sup> No. 203.

plete conformity. I had embodied instructions in your previous telegrams in the form of a statement which I read and eventually left with him while making clear that it was merely an aid to memory. In the course of my visit Herr von Ribbentrop read it himself through twice very carefully and I am sending you copy by air mail today.

His Excellency began by assuring me that the German Government warmly welcomed the step which was being undertaken by His Majesty's Government at Prague as being in conformity with Herr Hitler's own suggestion to me. He asked whether the French Government['s] *démarche* was identic[al] and whether it was serious. I told him that it was on parallel lines but [*sic*: ? and] in deep earnestness provided that the integrity of Czechoslovak[ia] were not impaired.

Following points in a long conversation are to be noted: German Government thoroughly distrusted M. Benes himself and were sceptical as to his real desire to find comprehensive solution.

The German Government's view was that the solution was an internal question for Czechoslovakia and that responsibility as to the lines of a satisfactory settlement rested entirely with Henlein. Herr von Ribbentrop while he did not wish to express opinion on details regarded generally the eight points of Henlein['s] Carlsbad speech as reasonable and just solution and German Government was of the opinion that they formed suitable basis for negotiation with the Prague Government. German Government's view was as set forth to me by Herr Hitler on March 3: they could not disinterest themselves in fate of Germans living in solid majorities on their own frontiers and right of self-determination in some form or another would have to be accorded to them.

He repeated several times with evident sincerity that German Government earnestly desired a peaceful and friendly solution, but equally several times, that if things were allowed to drift, and their doubts as to M. Benes's good faith proved justified and if in consequence there was bloodshed, Hitler would be compelled to take immediate action at whatever risk and cost to themselves and the world. He begged me to impress this extremely earnestly on His Majesty's Government in order that latter might bring it home to French Government. I offered to mention it to French Ambassador (as indeed I shall) but he asked that it might be done through you. It was in fact clear throughout my interview that while German Government are inclined to put faith in sincerity of yourself and Prime Minister they have less in French Government, and none in M. Benes.

Minister for Foreign Affairs begged that I would keep him informed of result of our *démarche* at Prague, and I said that I would do so if I were authorised to. He insisted that if His Majesty's Government and French Government gave definite advice to M. Benes the latter could not well refuse to act upon it. If on the other hand France attacked Germany because latter intervened in Czechoslovakia as result of massacre of Germans there, Germany would regard French act as war of aggression for preventive purposes. He stuck to his point when I argued to the contrary.

Finally Herr von Ribbentrop said and I agreed that we must now wait to see result of advice which we are giving at Prague. German Government truly desired peaceful settlement and co-operation with His Majesty's Government but all depended on whether M. Benes proved reasonable or not.

To sum up I would observe that Herr von Ribbentrop's language to me was unusually temperate except when referring to the possibility of action as result of massacre (Blutbad) of the Germans and that he was obviously deeply impressed both by dangers of situation if it is allowed to drag on and by the necessity of finding peaceful solution in this last opportunity for co-operation with Great Britain. His request to be kept informed and in touch with me indicates very clearly that far from resenting our interference Herr von Ribbentrop not only welcomed it but regards it as the only hope of that peaceful solution which today at any rate it is as much in their interests as ours to achieve.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Geneva and Rome.

#### No. 207

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*

*No. 186 Telegraphic: by telephone [C4232/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 12, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

While I was with Minister for Foreign Affairs last night, he put off by telephone a dinner with Himmler in order, as he said to the latter, to report my conversation to the Chancellor who leaves for Berchtesgaden to-day.

I have informed French Ambassador of upshot of any conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs and told him I had derived impression, though I had done my best to remove it, that German Government doubted the earnestness of the French *démarche* at Prague. French Ambassador said that he would himself ask for interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs with view to dispelling these doubts. He added that he himself was not at all sure that M. Benes did not in fact intend to be obstinate and to risk everything on a gambler's throw.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Geneva.

<sup>1</sup> No. 206.

#### No. 208

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12)*

*No. 188 Telegraphic: by telephone [C4233/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 12, 1938

My telegram No. 185.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of my conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs last night he observed that once Sudeten problem was settled Germany would be a

<sup>1</sup> No. 206.

'saturated' State and there would be no outstanding question between Great Britain and Germany except colonies, and consequently nothing to prevent a full discussion between our two countries on broadest possible lines, not only as regards colonies but also all other matters.

I was struck by the similarity of his language to that used by Field-Marshal Göring as reported in paragraph (? 5) of my despatch No. 381<sup>2</sup> April 20. It was also very much in accord with views expressed by me in my despatch No. 324<sup>3</sup> of April 1.

He was obviously impressed by need of finding peaceful solution of Sudeten question as essential precondition of such a consummation.

Repeated to Geneva.

<sup>2</sup> No. 152.

<sup>3</sup> No. 121.

### No. 209

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 13)*

*No. 239 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4266/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 12, 1938

My telegram No. 185.<sup>1</sup>

Following is text of statement I left with Minister of Foreign Affairs.

'His Majesty's Government and the French Government are, as the German Government are aware, using their influence in Prague to promote a peaceful and equitable settlement of the Sudeten German question and express the hope that the German Government will be ready to use their influence with the Sudeten Germans in the direction of moderation and to work with His Majesty's Government in promoting a settlement.

'On such information as His Majesty's Government have in their possession a peaceful settlement should certainly be capable of achievement. His Majesty's Government recall the Chancellor's remark to Sir Nevile Henderson on March 3rd that His Excellency was perfectly willing to live in peace and amity with Czechoslovakia on condition that the Sudeten Germans obtained full equality, and that if Great Britain really desired German friendship it was indispensable that His Majesty's Government should make it clear at Prague that they would not encourage the Czechoslovak Government in refusing proper treatment to nationals of German origin. Field-Marshal Göring also assured His Majesty's Ambassador on March 11 of Germany's earnest desire to improve her relations with Czechoslovakia.

'His Majesty's Government have always urged upon the Czechoslovak Government the importance of proper treatment of her nationals of German origin and they are now actively engaged in urging that Government to go to the limit of concession in an effort to reach a comprehensive and lasting agreement with the Sudeten Germans.

'His Majesty's Government would not wish to intervene in any matter of exclusively German-Czech relations. They recognise of course that the lot of the Sudeten Germans must be a matter of particular interest to Germany,

<sup>1</sup> No. 206.

but in the present situation it is undeniable that the problems that have been raised may affect the peace of Europe. It is the chief concern of His Majesty's Government, as it is doubtless that of the German Government, that peace should not be disturbed. That is their justification for raising this matter with the German Government, and indeed they feel it their duty to offer any assistance that they can give—and they believe in the present situation they are able to assist—towards reaching an equitable solution.

'His Majesty's Government are now using their influence urgently with the Czech Government to bring them to seek without delay a solution of the problem on comprehensive lines by direct negotiation with the Sudeten Germans. His Majesty's Government are thus doing their best to bring about a peaceful and equitable solution by representing to the Czechoslovak Government the necessity for a contribution from their side. But it takes two to make an agreement and if a settlement is to be reached it is to be hoped that Herr Henlein may be prevailed upon also to show a spirit of accommodation.

'His Majesty's Government do not stand on ceremony in this matter and they trust that the German Government will not do so either. The Sudeten Germans are Czech citizens but the Government of the Reich has undoubtedly a powerful influence upon the population of German race and speech living across the Czechoslovak-German frontier. And since the question is one that closely affects the peace of Europe, His Majesty's Government trust that, in view of the action taken by His Majesty's Government at Prague, the German Government will use their influence with Herr Henlein in the direction of moderation. His Majesty's Government have no doubt that the German Government would prefer a peaceful and orderly solution of the question to any other and they are hopeful that the German Government will use all their influence on behalf of such a solution.

'In one other way the German Government could, His Majesty's Government believe, assist towards the achievement of a settlement. If His Majesty's Government are to use their influence in Prague they must have some idea of the terms that would be likely from the German point of view to form the basis of an agreed settlement. If they encourage the Czechoslovak Government to put forward proposals that do not prove acceptable their efforts may be of no avail; if, however, the German Government could indicate the lines of a settlement which in their view would be satisfactory to the Sudeten-Deutschen His Majesty's Government would consider how far they could recommend acceptance by the Czechoslovak Government.'

#### No. 210

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 13)*

*No. 126 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4289/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 12, 1938

Considerable attention has been given in the Czech press to a statement said to have been made by M. Kalinin to the Czech delegation which visited Moscow for the 1st May celebrations.



M. Kalinin is said to have stated that Soviet Russia had always kept every agreement she had concluded with foreign States and would act in the same way in the case of an aggression against Czechoslovakia. If the treaties of friendship between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, France and Czechoslovakia were as firm as was desired by Soviet Russia, they would exercise a favourable influence upon British policy and have still greater importance than they already possess.

The 'Lidové Noviny' (Benes party) attaches great importance to this statement as refuting reports that Soviet Russia is withdrawing from European affairs, and concludes that friendship with Soviet Russia is an indispensable condition of Czechoslovakia's security and of her international position in Europe.

Repeated to Berlin and Moscow.

### No. 211

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 218 [C 4159/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 12, 1938

Sir,

The Czechoslovak Minister asked Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 6th May whether he could be given any further information with regard to the representations which you were to make in Prague; he thought that if he could be given an indication as to its tenor he might be able himself to assist by communicating with his Government.

2. M. Masaryk was given a very general outline of the contents of my telegram to you, No. 68.<sup>1</sup> It was explained that this represented our general attitude in the matter; you were being given some latitude as regards presentation, and Sir Alexander Cadogan could not say exactly in what form you would make your representations.

3. He then indicated briefly to M. Masaryk the sense of the successive paragraphs in that telegram. This did not add very much to what I had already told him on the 2nd May and M. Masaryk did not express any surprise, though in conversation afterwards he indicated by some of his remarks that the Czechoslovak Government felt that they were being rather let down by the Powers which had brought Czechoslovakia into being, but he himself fully understood the inevitability of it.

4. M. Masaryk said that he hoped that in our approach to Berlin we should not ask the German Government what they wanted. Sir Alexander Cadogan did not either confirm or deny that this was our intention. M. Masaryk was told that as a first step we were going to let the German Government know that we thought we could be of some assistance in the matter, and hoped that they would agree that we should try to do so. A great deal depended on the first reaction of the Germans; we should have to see how our discussion with them developed—if, indeed, it developed at all—and in the light of it we

<sup>1</sup> No. 171.

should have to decide exactly what to say to the German Government and how to deal with them. Apart from that, and discussing the matter purely from the theoretical point of view, Sir Alexander Cadogan asked M. Masaryk what his objections were to asking the Germans to indicate what they wanted. M. Masaryk produced no reason that had not been heard before; in fact, he only said that they would be encouraged to put forward unreasonable demands. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that that might be so, but it was more likely that they would refuse to say anything at all. That was the German game which they had been playing for a number of years, but on looking back it seemed to him that there might perhaps be something to be said for getting the Germans at any given moment to indicate what their aims were, if indeed it were possible to do that, because it was hardly credible that they would state in so many words anything half so excessive as what they would be disposed to demand or able to take a few months later. M. Masaryk did not defend his thesis very strongly, and he did not seem to attach any great importance to it.

I am, &c.  
HALIFAX

No. 212

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 13)*  
*No. 189 Telegraphic [C 4270/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 13, 1938

My telegram No. 185.<sup>1</sup>

I should have mentioned that the only unfavourable reaction on the part of the Minister for Foreign Affairs on reading *aide-mémoire* which I left with him was in respect to 'moderating' advice to the Sudeten. Herr von Ribbentrop while clearly not liking expression asked me what we meant by it. I told him that, speaking personally, apart from its general use I contemplated as specific case the eventuality of deadlock arising in possible negotiations between Henlein and Prague Government. In such circumstances we might ask German Government to give such moderating advice to Henlein as would enable us to help at Prague.<sup>2</sup> Minister for Foreign Affairs did not raise objection to this suggestion.

I regard German reaction as far as it goes as quite as satisfactory as I anticipated and I trust that you do so also. All depends now on M. Benes's reactions or rather action. Mere words may well precipitate an incident and I take all responsibility in assuring you that if there were one Germany would act at once.

United States Ambassador whose views in this matter coincide very closely with my own informs me that he spoke yesterday to Ledebuhr [*sic*] (a Sudeten senator whose views command respect). The latter was convinced

<sup>1</sup> No. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Sir N. Henderson was instructed on May 19 that his language to Herr von Ribbentrop had been approved.

that M. Benes relying on French and partially Russian and on the probability of eventual British support wants a show down now rather than in six months time when position may be less favourable to Czechoslovakia. This is the view widely held and it is fraught with the utmost danger.

### No. 213

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 13)*  
*No. 120 Telegraphic [C 4287/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 13, 1938

My telegram No. 117.<sup>1</sup>

President of the Council has just informed me over the telephone that having discussed matters further in the Cabinet he proposes to confirm his answer in writing.

I observed that my representations had been verbal but that I saw no objection to a written reply provided that the reply itself was satisfactory. I recited substance of third paragraph of my above-mentioned telegram beginning 'he personally' and furthermore asked whether there would be any reference in his reply to a 'state of nationalities'. Dr. Hodza confirmed substance of what I have telegraphed but was inclined to demur at any express reference to a state of nationalities. He said however that it was clearly understood that Czechoslovakia was not a national refuge [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> state nor was there anything in Constitution to that effect. Dr. Hodza thought that written reply would be ready for me at the beginning of next week.

I have since been informed from office of President of the Republic that M. Benes will receive me Tuesday afternoon, May 17.

Repeated to Geneva, Rome, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 204.

<sup>2</sup> This word is obviously an error.

### No. 214

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 14)*  
*No. 451 Telegraphic [C 4312/1941/18]*

ROME, May 13, 1938

I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning what view he took of Czechoslovak problem. I said to him that it seemed to me to be the great danger spot in the present situation.

Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that he was not greatly disturbed by it. He did not think Germany was planning any immediate surprise though of course he could not guarantee future developments of danger. I remarked that I felt sure that Italy was particularly anxious to avoid as we were a European conflagration. He assented and did not seem to anticipate that this was likely to be caused by trouble as regards Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin and Prague.

No. 215

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 83 Telegraphic [C 4378/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 14, 1938*

Czechoslovak Minister yesterday expressed to Sir A. Cadogan the hope that visit of Herr Henlein to London<sup>1</sup> had no official character and that he would be given no official reception.

Sir A. Cadogan assured the Minister that there was nothing of an official character in the visit. He had only known a day or two previously that it was likely to take place and he knew no more about it than had appeared in the press.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Herr Henlein arrived in London on May 14.

No. 216

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 15)*

*No. 123 Telegraphic [C 4317/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *May 14, 1938*

Great prominence has been given in press to Henlein's visit to London. Coming on top of Anglo-French *démarche* the matter has caused considerable excitement and indeed eloquence in political circles who jumped to conclusion that it followed an invitation from His Majesty's Government. I even hear it came near to breaking hard won unity of . . .<sup>1</sup> with regard to nationalities programme. Official circles too were not wholly happy about the affair.

I have taken line with those with whom I have come into contact that visit (of which I personally first heard on afternoon of May 12) should rather be welcomed as affording an opportunity to give Henlein sound advice.

I presume you have informed Czechoslovak Minister in London of circumstances of visit and I should be grateful to learn of them for my own information. I have just heard over the telephone that Dr. Masaryk has reported he is not displeased over what has happened during visit.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 15)*  
*No. 125 Telegraphic [C 4319/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 14, 1938

Following is a fully summarized translation of communication referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

The Czechoslovak Government sincerely thanks British and French Governments for interest shown at London Conference in appeasement in Central Europe and especially in affairs of Czechoslovakia and is grateful for their decision to approach interested Governments through diplomatic channel and inform them of Conference views.

The Czechoslovak Government equally welcomes and appreciates good services which British and French Governments have rendered it in manifesting their keen interest in settlement of conditions of nationalities in Czechoslovakia and thus in consolidation of international relations in Central Europe.

The Czechoslovak Government sees in foregoing no interference in its internal affairs, being convinced that it flows from Treaty of St. Germain. It is in conformity with intentions of Czechoslovak Government and with efforts it has hitherto made to collaborate with other States in consolidation of peace through a final settlement of questions concerning nationalities which live in Czechoslovakia. The suggestions of British and French Governments regarding questions set out in Czechoslovak Government's memorandum which was handed to them will be closely studied in the course of preparing nationalities covenant; they will be taken into consideration in such a manner that solution given those problems may contribute on the one hand to appeasement in relations between nationalities, and on the other hand to a consolidation of integrity and internal strength of Czechoslovakian Republic which precisely by that integrity and internal strength is one of the conditions of consolidation in Central Europe.

By efforts which it has made hitherto and in the spirit of good advice given it by British and French Governments the Czechoslovak Government, as has already been emphasized in its declaration of March 28, aims on the one hand at fully assuring peace in Central Europe and on the other *at further normal and more perfect development of its system of nationalities in broad framework provided by constitution.*

In these efforts the Czechoslovak Government is inspired by firm desire to satisfy all the justified desiderata of nationalities; at the same time *it would particularly observe that good result of these efforts would depend upon good will for a friendly settlement being fully manifested by all interested parties.* As emphasized in its memorandum the Czechoslovak Government is itself animated by best

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram stated that the communication summarized above had been given to Mr. Newton with the request that it should be telegraphed immediately and regarded as a verbal statement. A similar communication was being made to the French Ambassador.



will and is firmly resolved to reach goal indicated. It has no intention to delay matter and preparatory work already in hand is considerably advanced. Moreover the Czechoslovak Government is firmly confident of reaching agreement. It will inform British and French Governments of further course of its labours and fresh negotiations with all who are interested in the question.

Subsequent to receipt of this communication I received a telephone message from Ministry of Foreign Affairs informing me officially that last seven words of communication refer to 'all nationalities and of course the Henlein party'.

The passages underlined are underlined in text.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin, and Rome.

Please repeat to Paris.

<sup>2</sup> These passages are italicized above.

## No. 218

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21)*

*No. 497 [C 4614/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 14, 1938

My Lord,

On each occasion on which Herr Hitler has made a *coup* the news has been received with surprise by the world, not because the deed was surprising in itself (Herr Hitler has been good enough to warn the world each time of his intentions), but because he chose his own moment to act and acted with decisive suddenness. We have seen this happen with the departure from the League, the declaration of compulsory military service, the invasion of the Rhineland and the Austrian 'Anschluss'. We are now on the eve of the attempt to realise the German programme in Czechoslovakia. In his despatch No. 425<sup>1</sup> of the 26th April, 1933, Sir Horace Rumbold wrote: 'I fear that it would be misleading to base any hopes on a serious modification of the views of the Chancellor and his entourage. Herr Hitler's own record goes to show that he is a man of extraordinary obstinacy. His success in fighting difficulty after difficulty during the fourteen years of his political struggle is a proof of his indomitable character.'

2. What is the German programme in Czechoslovakia which Herr Hitler is determined to carry through with this characteristic obstinacy? The answer may be read clearly in his own statements and in the reports from this Embassy during the last five years.

3. On the very first page of 'Mein Kampf' Herr Hitler writes: 'The German nation possesses no moral right to the development of a colonial policy so long as it is not able to include its own sons in a common State.' The first point of the party programme reads: 'We demand, on the ground of the right of self-determination of all peoples, the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany.'

<sup>1</sup> For this and other references to earlier years see preceding volumes of this Collection.

4. When Herr Hitler came to power he was obliged, for tactical reasons, to proceed more cautiously than he had done as an irresponsible revolutionary. The limelight was switched on to internal affairs; abroad peace was declared to be the first objective, and little was heard of pan-German aspirations. Nevertheless, these aspirations were voiced, if only in a low tone, which increased in volume and clearness with the advance in German rearmament.

5. As early as September 1933 Mr. Newton, in his despatch No. 890 of the 13th September, reported a pan-German demonstration which depicted the spontaneous movement of the Germans outside the frontiers to join the Reich. In his annual report for 1933 Sir Eric Phipps wrote: 'In the Nazi policy of aggression, as exemplified by their conduct towards Austria, the Czechs saw a threat of encirclement; in their dreams of uniting the German race, they saw a threat of actual partition.'

6. During the next three years care was taken not to shout from the house-tops that the existing situation in Czechoslovakia could not be tolerated in Germany. Nevertheless, it was clear to every observer here that such was the view of the German Government. In all of his many despatches on the aims of German foreign policy Sir Eric Phipps placed Austria first and the rectification of the eastern frontier second on the list. During the whole of this period the problem was kept before the public by means of a continual press campaign, which accused Czechoslovakia of oppressing the Sudeten Germans and of serving as an aircraft carrier to Russia. In his annual report for 1935 Sir Eric Phipps spoke of German anger 'at the very existence of a State which could contain over 3 million Germans within its frontier, and a growing impatience at the unfair treatment to which these Germans were believed to be exposed in the interests of the Czech majority'.

7. Occasionally, a more direct intimation was received of Germany's intentions. Thus, in 1935 General von Reichenau spoke frankly of the 'ultimate unification of the German population in Czechoslovakia with their fellow-Germans of the Reich' (Sir E. Phipps's despatch No. 1140 of the 7th November, 1935). In August 1936 the 'Schwarze Korps'<sup>2</sup> attacked a German newspaper for describing the German-Czechoslovak frontier as the boundary of Germany (Mr. Newton's despatch No. 882 of the 21st August).

8. By 1937 the campaign against Czechoslovakia had grown more vociferous. In his despatch No. 358 of the 13th April Sir E. Phipps, in discussing Germany's desire for a free hand in the east, spoke of Czechoslovakia as being 'at present the most sensitive point'. In his telegram No. 251 of the 20th October, 1937, Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes, outlining German aims, said that: 'the campaign against Czechoslovakia will be carried on and the ground prepared for the incorporation of the Sudeten Germans into the Reich without the necessity for a major conflict. . . . The greatest danger is that some unexpected event . . . may excite the Chancellor to embark on an adventure.' In conversation with me at Rominten General Göring made no secret of Germany's intentions. He quoted point 1 of the party programme, and said

<sup>2</sup> The newspaper of the S.S.

that the unity of Germany was the declared aim of the Nazi Government. That did not mean where Germans were in real minorities, but where they were in united national *blocs* immediately on the German frontier, such as Austria and the Sudeten in Czechoslovakia (my letter to the Secretary of State of the 10th October, 1937).

9. In 1938 declarations of German policy came thick and fast from both the Chancellor and General Göring. In his Reichstag speech of the 20th February, 1938, Herr Hitler said that the right of the Sudeten Germans and Austrians to self-determination could not be ignored because in the present instance it was the case of Germany being involved. It was in the long run intolerable for a world Power to know that at its side existed fellow-countrymen continually being subjected to the greatest suffering owing to their sympathy with the Reich as a whole. Field-Marshal Göring, in a speech on the 1st March, 1938, said: 'As the Führer in his Reichstag speech used those proud words to the effect that we should no longer suffer 10 million German fellow nationals to be abused on the other side of the frontiers, you members of the air force know that, if it must be, you will to the last breath give all you have for these words of the Führer.' In my conversation with him on the 3rd March, 1938, Herr Hitler said that he was prepared to risk a general war if foreign States refused his pretensions to safeguard the interests of Germans living outside the Reich. He was prepared to go to war at any cost for these 10 million Germans. If there were shooting of Germans in Austria or Czechoslovakia, Germany would be at hand, and if internal explosions took place there Germany would act like lightning. In his Reichstag speech of the 18th March, 1938, Herr Hitler said: 'Germany only wishes for peace. She does not wish to do any harm to other peoples, but she will herself also under no circumstances tolerate an injury, and, above all, she is ready at any time to fight to the last for her honour and her existence. Let no one think that this is only a phrase, and let everyone realize, above all, that a great people with a sense of honour cannot indefinitely look on inactive while millions of members of its own blood are subjected to continued oppression.'

10. During the last five years German intentions have often been deliberately veiled by a smoke screen, and there have been many statements which do not tally with those quoted above. But it may be regarded as certain that the latter represent the fixed line of German policy, and the world will have no reason to express surprise when Herr Hitler attempts, at the moment which suits him best, to translate his words into deeds. Only a successful war will prevent or delay the realisation of his aims. The threat of war will not deter him; it will at the best only compel him to bide his time.

11. The existence of a dissatisfied *bloc* of foreigners in a modern State is a liability rather than an asset. In the light of after events, for example, it is clear to us that the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany was a mistake. The recovery of these provinces became a French aim, and a situation arose which rendered a peaceful composition of Franco-German differences impossible. It would probably have been in German interests to have recognised the error and to have made an arrangement with France on the basis of the

return of the conquered territory. In the case of Czechoslovakia, a small and defenceless country, the arguments for a composition are immeasurably stronger, even though her very weakness and our own responsibility for her creation make them the more distasteful. Disagreeable though it may be, I am nevertheless convinced that it is in the interests not only of European peace, but of the existence of Czechoslovakia, that a serious effort should be made to compound with Germany while there is yet time.

12. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's representative at Prague.

I have, &c.,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 219

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 84 Telegraphic [C 4386/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 16, 1938

I send you for your own information the following summary of conversations which Herr Henlein had in London with Mr. Churchill and with Sir R. Vansittart.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Henlein told Mr. Churchill that he claimed the right to profess Nazi ideology, but did not claim to impose it on others. He had never received orders or even recommendations from Berlin.

The position in his country was intolerable, and the Czechs must no longer maintain that it was their State in which others were allowed to live, but must accept the position that it was a common country of all the various races.

He denied that he claimed a veto as regards the Czech-Soviet Treaty. He disapproved of that Treaty and claimed the right to advocate its abrogation, but he did not regard this as a *sine qua non* for agreement.

He explained that it had been necessary for him to describe his Carlsbad demands as a minimum, and not a maximum, because Czechoslovak newspapers had insisted that these had been put forward merely as bargaining points for electioneering purposes.

He thought there were three possibilities, namely (1) some form of autonomy within the Czechoslovak State; (2) a plebiscite, probably leading to an 'Anschluss'; (3) war. His policy was to make a last attempt to arrive at the first, but it must be reached soon, and by agreement, as his followers were impatient and would prefer an 'Anschluss'.

If no settlement could be reached, he proposed to appeal to the Great Powers for a plebiscite under international supervision, in which the three questions would be (1) maintenance of the *status quo*; (2) autonomy; (3) 'Anschluss'.

<sup>1</sup> For the full report of these conversations see Appendix II.

He was asked whether he thought any agreement on autonomy was possible which would not destroy the integrity of the Czechoslovak State and which would enable him and his followers to act as loyal members of the State, prepared to defend it against aggression, from whatever side it might come.

He thought this should be feasible on the following lines:—

There should be a central Parliament in Prague, controlling foreign policy, defence, finance and communications. All parties should be entitled to express their views, and the Government would act on majority decisions. The frontier fortresses could be manned by Czech troops, who would have unhindered access thereto. The Sudeten German regions, and possibly the other minority districts, should enjoy local autonomy, that is to say, they should have their own Town and County Councils and a Diet, in which matters of common regional concern could be debated within definitely delimited frontiers. He would be prepared to submit questions of fact, e.g. tracing of the boundary, to an impartial tribunal, perhaps even appointed by the League of Nations. All parties would be free to organise and offer themselves for election, and impartial courts of justice would function in autonomous districts. Officials (postal, railway and police) in the German-speaking regions would be German speaking, and a reasonable proportion of the total taxes collected would be returned to these regions for their administration.

M. Masaryk, who was afterwards informed by Mr. Churchill of this conversation, professed himself contented with a settlement on these lines.

In a subsequent conversation with Sir Robert Vansittart, of which a more lengthy account will be sent to you later, the discussion turned mainly on the three following points.

Sir Robert Vansittart emphasised the necessity for quick progress and therefore of concentrating purely on the settlement of internal grievances and the exclusion of all matters pertaining to foreign policy. The introduction of such matters, Sir Robert Vansittart pointed out, would only tend to complicate and slow up the pressing business of arriving at a solution before any untoward incidents rendered it more difficult. Secondly, Sir Robert Vansittart pointed out to Herr Henlein the difficulty of putting forward any claim tending to set up a Nazi State within the borders of a democratic State. This, he said, would be unworkable in practice and it was a claim that would in any case receive little sympathy, for there must be many means of rectifying internal grievances which stopped short of that. Thirdly, Sir Robert Vansittart advised Herr Henlein strongly not to dwell upon the claim for reparations. The word had an ugly ring, and in any case the introduction of such contentious matter would only retard indefinitely the desired settlement.

On all these points Herr Henlein seemed very reasonable, particularly on the first where he fully understood the view that all such extraneous matter should be excluded. He gave the impression of being genuinely anxious for a speedy settlement, though he emphasised strongly that time is now the essence of the affair and that his own position would be exceedingly difficult if there were now no tangible results.



The foregoing, as mentioned above, should be regarded as for your own information only.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> On May 20 Sir E. Phipps was informed that in conversation with M. Bonnet, he could, at his discretion and in strict confidence, make use of the information contained in Nos. 219 and 220.

Lord Halifax gave a short account of these conversations to the Cabinet on May 18. He added that M. Bonnet had made it clear 'at Geneva' that he 'wanted H.M.G. to put as much pressure as possible on Dr. Benes to reach a settlement with the Sudeten Deutsch in order to save France from the cruel dilemma of dishonouring her Agreements or becoming involved in war'. Lord Halifax attended the meetings of the Council of the League at Geneva on May 12 and 14, but there appears to be no record in the Foreign Office archives of this conversation.

## No. 220

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 85 Telegraphic [C 4386/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 16, 1938*

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I thought it well that you should be in possession of this information before your interview with the President tomorrow.

While it is true that the Czechoslovak Government will no doubt have been made aware by the Czechoslovak Minister of the line taken by Herr Henlein here, it is not desirable that you should yourself disclose it to the President. If it became known in certain quarters that Herr Henlein is disposed to be as reasonable as these conversations appear to show, it may get him into trouble with his supporters and might lead National Socialist quarters in Germany to try to stiffen him, and thus have the opposite effect to that which we desire.

At the same time I think that, without going into any detail which might be embarrassing for Herr Henlein, you should, when speaking to the President, take advantage of the knowledge conveyed in my immediately preceding telegram, and in particular of the conversation between Herr Henlein and Sir R. Vansittart. I would suggest that, without disclosing Herr Henlein's attitude as regards the three headings of the Carlsbad speech specially referred to in that conversation, you should advise the President strongly to come forward at once with a good offer dealing with the other points in the Carlsbad programme, and making no reference to the three points in question. You might hint to the President that it seems to us possible that if the Czechoslovak Government ignored these points in the offer they put forward, Herr Henlein would not revert to them. But this of course would be dependent upon the offer that was made on the other points being a really good one and made at a very early date, this week if possible.

I am encouraged by what would appear to be Herr Henlein's attitude, but

<sup>1</sup> No. 219.

I feel that if advantage is to be taken of his present disposition by which Sir R. Vansittart was impressed, it is essential that the Czechoslovak Government should make a sincere and thorough-going offer at the earliest possible moment, since if the present opportunity is boldly seized a large offer of basis of negotiations made quickly may lay the foundation of an agreement. Any avoidable delay on the part of the Czechoslovak Government would, I fear, give the impression that the Czechoslovak Government were not really in earnest, give time for mischief makers, and Herr Henlein's attitude might be expected to stiffen and the situation in the Sudeten country to deterioriate.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

No. 221

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21)*

*No. 157 [C 4601/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 16, 1938

My Lord,

The suggestion that the relations of Czechoslovakia and Germany might be solved on the basis of the cession of the Sudeten German districts to Germany, whether by plebiscite or otherwise, has been actively canvassed in the British press and elsewhere of late, and I was interested to observe from your despatch No 197<sup>1</sup> of the 2nd May that the Czechoslovak Minister in London would apparently contemplate such a solution without over-great apprehension. I have myself given some thought to the matter, and I have the honour to submit certain considerations which suggest themselves to me as tending against the likelihood, quite apart from the desirability, of a permanent solution on those lines.

2. In the first place, I share, if I may say so, your Lordship's surprise that M. Masaryk should believe that, if the German minority were one day to be detached from the Czechoslovak State and to join the Reich, this would not necessarily involve the same process being followed in respect of the Polish and Hungarian minorities. To my mind, one reason why the Czechoslovak Government would be well advised in their own interest to make terms with the German population is that, were that minority to secede, the precedent would almost certainly be used by the Polish, and very possibly also by the Hungarian, minorities to do likewise. Whether a Czechoslovak State could continue to exist if those parts which contain not only German, but also Polish and Hungarian, minorities were detached from it appears to me to be at the least problematical, even if it were possible to detach only those portions which contained really predominant minorities.

3. But, quite apart from any question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities, I cannot help feeling doubts as to whether Bohemia<sup>2</sup> itself is permanently capable of division into two parts. It was, at any rate, the view

<sup>1</sup> No. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Note in original.* The term 'Bohemia' is used throughout this despatch as describing the 'historic provinces' of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia.

of Versailles Peace Conference that it forms a 'natural region' and is incapable of division. The reasons advanced by the Versailles Committee on Czechoslovak questions in support of that conclusion were divided under four headings: economic, geographical, political and strategic; and there may be advantage in examining them from the reverse point of view to that in the mind of the Versailles Conference. Then it was a question of deciding whether the German fringe should or should not be included in Czechoslovakia. The question in the near future may well be whether the Czech centre of Bohemia should or should not follow the German fringe into the Reich.

4. On the economic aspect of the question, the Committee on Czechoslovak Questions at the Peace Conference stated that—

'The whole of the region occupied by the Germans of Bohemia is industrially and economically dependent upon Bohemia rather than upon Germany. The Germans of Bohemia cannot exist without the economic co-operation of the Czechs, nor the Czechs without the economic co-operation of the Germans. There is between them a complete interdependence in this respect.'

While for the reasons stated in my despatch No. 136 E.<sup>3</sup> of the 29th April there may be grounds for the view that it is an exaggeration to speak of a 'complete interdependence' between the Sudeten German districts and Czech Bohemia, nevertheless it is the fact that the Sudeten districts depend on the other parts of the country for their food supply, and there is also a close network of communications, business and personal, between the two. It would certainly be to the economic advantage of both sides to maintain their present connexion, and it is permissible to doubt whether Czech Bohemia could for long maintain her economic independence if she were deprived of the German industries, and whether she would not rather be forced of her own accord to seek at least a customs union with the Reich. Moreover, viewed at any rate from the angle of this post, there would seem to be at least two important reasons which would incline the Reich Government in the circumstances envisaged to bring Czech Bohemia under complete economic subserviency: In the first place, there is the question of food supply. As stated above, the Sudeten regions already obtain their food supply from the Czech area. If they were attached to the Reich, the latter would surely insist upon that position being at least maintained. But would the Reich not also be tempted to go further and insist on the whole of the agricultural output of Czech Bohemia being at its disposal, not only to supply, as before, the Sudeten districts, but also to assist in the Reich's aspirations to economic autarchy? Secondly, since the 'Anschluss' with Austria, Czechoslovakia forms more than ever a wedge (or, more geographically, the butt end of a champagne cork) thrust deep into the flank of Germany, and the natural route of communications between, for example, Leipzig and Breslau on the one side and Vienna on the other runs through Bohemia. It can hardly be believed that such a situation is to the liking of the Reich, even though little has been said of it publicly, but the situation would not be remedied by the mere incorporation of the Sudeten

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

Germans. Should, however, that take place, it seems to me that the communications question, for military even more than for commercial reasons, would provide an additional inducement on the German side to carry the incorporation still further so as to include the whole of Bohemia.

5. On the geographical aspect of the question, the Versailles Committee stated:—

‘Bohemia forms a natural region, clearly defined by its fringe of mountains. The mere fact that a German population has established itself in the outlying districts at a relatively recent date did not appear to the committee a sufficient reason for depriving Bohemia of its natural frontiers.’

Were the Sudeten regions incorporated in Germany, the same geographical fact that ‘Bohemia forms a natural region’ would still apply, though in a different way. The geographical absurdity (from the German point of view) of a frontier that begins at Bratislava and goes right round the Bohemia mountains to Ratisbon has existed since the ‘Anschluss’. It would not be solved by the secession of the Sudeten regions, but their secession would surely provide an impulse to make away with it and bring the whole ‘natural region’ within the Reich.

6. On the political side, the Versailles Committee stated:—

‘Politically, the Germans of Bohemia have always formed part of Bohemia.’

In the circumstances contemplated, the great political fact on which emphasis would chiefly be laid is that Bohemia was from earliest days part of the Holy Roman Empire, and that that Empire was an Empire of the German nation (that is, ‘Das Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation’). It is a point to which attention is often drawn to-day by such representative persons as members of the German Legation here.

7. Of the strategic aspect, the committee wrote:—

‘These reasons (i.e., reasons of national security) depend on geographical considerations. The chain of mountains which surrounds Bohemia constitutes a line of defence for the country. To take away this line of mountains would be to place Bohemia at the mercy of Germany.’

This hardly requires comment. Czechoslovakia deprived of her mountainous and wooded frontiers would, indeed, lie even more at the mercy of Germany than she does at present. In theory, it might be possible to build a new Maginot line further back, but the practical difficulties seem overwhelming. It is for that reason, among others, that it is to my mind more probable than not that the Czechs would prefer to fight rather than give up their present frontiers. But should the issue be decided by force of arms, it seems unlikely for military reasons alone that the Germans would confine their objective to the Sudeten areas. I would refer in this connexion to my despatch No. 105<sup>4</sup> of the 8th April.

<sup>4</sup> This should read April 11. This despatch reported a conversation between the Military Attaché and General Faucher, Chief of the French Military Mission, who concurred in thinking there were ‘grave military objections’ to the Germans limiting their objectives to the Sudeten districts.

8. The only reason that I know of for doubting whether the Reich would wish to incorporate the whole of Bohemia in its territory is based on the theory that National Socialist Germany neither desires nor would admit 'inferior races' such as the Czechs in her midst. This, however, brings little comfort to the Czechs. Those who have studied 'Mein Kampf' in detail assert that it also provides for vassal States of alien population, and they believe that that may well be what the Reich has in mind for them.

9. My general conclusion is, therefore, to doubt whether there is any permanent half-way house between a Czechoslovakia within her present frontiers and the abandonment to Germany of the whole area covered by the Historic Provinces (save perhaps such parts as might be snatched by the Poles). I believe, in fine, that, broadly speaking, the Peace Conference was right in thinking that Bohemia forms a natural region, and I am doubtful whether any attempt to divide it up would provide a permanent solution.

10. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Berlin and Paris.

I have, &c.

B. C. NEWTON

No. 222

*Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 23)*

No. 248 [C 4656/1941/18]

MOSCOW, May 16, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that yesterday M. Coulondre, the French Ambassador, asked me to come and see him to-day. He added that he would be very glad if I could bring Colonel Firebrace, the Military Attaché, with me.

2. On receiving us, M. Coulondre explained that he had just been summoned to Paris by the new French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Georges Bonnet, who was a very old friend of his and with whom he had served at the Stresa and other Conferences, and said that he was leaving to-night. He then enquired whether we had received any information in regard to the latest conversations between His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin and the German Government in regard to Czechoslovakia. I said we had not, to which he replied that he had received information (which he subsequently stated had come from Paris—evidently from M. François-Poncet in Berlin via the Quai d'Orsay) that the first conversation had taken place, in Herr von Ribbentrop's absence in Italy, between Sir Neville Henderson and Herr Woermann at which Sir Neville had emphasized the fact that any German military interference in Czechoslovakia would be regarded by His Majesty's Government as a *quasi casus belli* (the words, M. Coulondre said, which had been used by Disraeli in 1878, and the full import of which Bismarck had not understood at the time), Herr Woermann thus having been given a clear indication of the attitude of His Majesty's Government.<sup>1</sup> The next interview on this subject,

<sup>1</sup> On May 20th Sir N. Henderson telegraphed that the French Ambassador's account of



M. Coulondre said, took place some days later between Sir Nevile Henderson and Herr von Ribbentrop on the latter's return to Berlin from Italy in the course of which His Majesty's Ambassador had again emphasized the serious view which would be taken by His Majesty's Government of any German aggression in Czechoslovakia, to which Herr von Ribbentrop, so M. Coulondre affirmed, had replied to His Majesty's Ambassador that, while Germany was prepared, and was indeed doing her utmost at the present moment, to follow a policy of conciliation, nevertheless if there were any disturbances in Sudeten German territory involving bloodshed, the German Government would then be bound to intervene.

3. M. Coulondre said that he would certainly be questioned at the Quai d'Orsay as to the Russian situation, both political and military, and as to what the Russian reactions would be likely to be in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia, and that in view of these grave events in Berlin it was time for us to take stock of the situation as to the possible Russian reactions, and that, as he was about to start for Paris immediately, he had called us in for consultation.

4. M. Coulondre said that it was extremely difficult for anybody to secure up-to-date information regarding the situation in Russia; that everything in this country was impalpable and indefinite, and the difficulty of tendering a concrete opinion was greater here than in any post he had yet been to. He said that when he was in Paris last M. Blum was in power, and that he felt constrained on that occasion to tender very moderate and guarded advice, of a distinctly pessimistic nature moreover, in regard to Soviet affairs and the chances of the Soviet Government taking a more positive part in counter-acting German machinations, but that in the course of the last month he had felt, in the vague and intuitive manner in which one senses such matters in Soviet Russia, that the situation had changed in that he felt that the Soviet Government might now be prepared to react more forcibly in a military sense to any German aggression than they were prepared to do some months ago. He said that he had had a recent conversation with M. Litvinov in which the latter appeared to be much more preoccupied and more serious in regard to possible Russian action. That whereas, before, M. Litvinov might have been likened to a soldier marching gaily to the front with a posy in the barrel of his rifle, he, Litvinov, now gave him the impression of the same soldier just returned from the trenches, brought face to face with the realities of a situation which the Soviets had up till now endeavoured to shirk.

his conversation (see above No. 187) with Herr Woermann 'is of course complete misrepresentation. Words *casus belli* were used by me in connexion with French not His Majesty's Government. I actually read [my own account] to the French Ambassador here after sending it.' Sir N. Henderson added that 'as it seems to me highly undesirable that the French Government should be under the impression that I went so far in talking to the German Government, I called on French Ambassador this morning and asked him to correct it. He told me that the misunderstanding might have arisen owing to the fact that he had underlined Woermann's story of Bismarck and Disraeli as proof of German comprehension of the seriousness of the situation. He denied however that he had misrepresented me and undertook to make that point clear to his Government.' See also No. 348.

5. Before precisising his remarks, M. Coulondre said that he would like to emphasize the fact that he had sent for me with Colonel Firebrace to consult us purely privately. That he felt satisfied that the recent Franco-British conversations in London had proved that both our nations were now closer together than they had been since the war, and that he therefore considered us as friends bound by the same problems and perplexities.

6. At this point, as I had only just noticed that His Excellency's telephone could not be disconnected, I suggested the advisability of adjourning to another room. M. Coulondre, on resuming the conversation, repeated that it was almost impossible to form an exact estimate of what the Soviet Government might do in certain eventualities. We knew that power in the Soviet Union was centred in the Kremlin, that Stalin was practically a dictator, that the army on the whole was more contented than it had ever been and was certainly better fed than the whole of the remaining population, that they had enormous supplies of ammunition, some thousands of tanks, and quite a formidable, if obsolescent, air force, and that he had moreover been reliably informed that M. Voroshilov had reported to M. Stalin that the Soviet army was fit for war and that he had also heard from his Bulgarian colleague that, in order to forestall any possible revolt on the part of the peasants in the event of mobilisation, a large number of able-bodied conscripts had in fact already been attached to units to increase their peace-time strength.

7. Another factor which he considered should not be omitted from our calculations in estimating the Russian situation was the military situation in the Far East, namely that while, at the time of the capture of Nanking by the Japanese, pessimism had been rampant in the Government-controlled Soviet press, now, however, the tightening-up of the Chinese resistance, the apparently good account which Chiang Kai-shek's fresh German-trained troops had given of themselves, and the successes of the Soviet aeroplanes recently at Hankow and elsewhere, had undoubtedly led the Kremlin into thinking that any possible Japanese menace to their interests in the Far East had for the present been deflected down into Central China, thus relieving the Soviet Government of much anxiety on that score and enabling them thereby to make if necessary a correspondingly greater effort in the West. M. Coulondre therefore felt that one could in fact place some reliance on the Soviet Government both in a political and in a military sense at the present juncture, and that on the whole he felt inclined to tell the Quai d'Orsay that he was more optimistic of possible Russian intervention on the side of Czechoslovakia at the present moment than he had been heretofore. He would however much like to have our views.

8. I replied to His Excellency that I was not prepared to commit myself on an issue of this kind at short notice and without the most careful consideration of all the factors, both military and political which were involved. I said that I felt that extreme caution must be exercised in estimating the value and the strength of any possible Russian action in regard to Czechoslovakia. That the difficulties of collecting information here, the lack of reliable evidence, and

the rapidity with which the military situation might possibly change so soon as the Russian Higher Command had recovered from the purges, were all factors which made me very reluctant to dare to put any views forward except in an extremely tentative and guarded manner. I hoped His Excellency would not be disappointed if I ventured to disagree with him in regard to any facile optimism to which the present Russian situation might have led him. I said, and Colonel Firebrace agreed, that it would in my opinion be dangerous to put one's faith too much in the statements of MM. Litvinov or Voroshilov. That the consensus of opinion of nearly all the Military Attachés, with the possible exception of the United States' Attaché, was that the recent political reconditioning of the Russian army had undoubtedly undermined discipline and reduced its value as an offensive weapon, while the purges amongst the Generals and senior ranks of the Soviet army had thrown the General Staff and Higher Command into such appalling chaos and disorganisation for the time being that one could not possibly tell what might or might not happen in the event of a major operation, and, after all, His Excellency would probably agree with me that no one could see what the end would be were hostilities to commence in Europe over the question of the Sudeten German minority in Czechoslovakia.

9. At this point Colonel Firebrace took up the discussion and said that it might be of value to consider the strong and weak points of the Red Army. Its strength lay in the number of its Divisions, in the number of its tanks and aeroplanes and generally in its material. The Army had, however, been seriously weakened by recent events. The High Command had been disorganized and had, to a large extent, disappeared, it being noteworthy that practically all the senior officers who had received training in Germany had gone. It was estimated that about 65 per cent. of general officers had been liquidated. His Excellency intervened to say that this was exactly the figure which his Government, too, had arrived at.

10. Colonel Firebrace continued that a further source of weakness was the reduction in authority of the Commanding Officers owing to the re-introduction of the Political Commissar, as well as to the fact that many junior officers had been promoted to high positions, even Captains having been promoted to command Divisions.

11. Colonel Firebrace also expressed doubt whether the transport system would stand up to the strain of war and be capable of efficiently supplying the Red Army. In general he felt that the Red Army was loyal and contented, but mobilization would bring into its ranks discontented elements which might prove a serious danger to the régime. He had not been impressed with such tactical exercises which [*sic*] he had seen and felt convinced that the Red Army would suffer very heavy casualties through mass formation attacks in the early battles. Troops who were accustomed to hearing their commanding officers described as traitors might react very unfavourably to such casualties. It was however possible that the Soviet Army with its initial impetus could advance some distance into Poland taking into consideration its superiority in numbers and material.

12. Colonel Firebrace said that in his opinion the Soviet Army would have to advance through Poland if any serious effort was to be made to assist Czechoslovakia. The disposition of the Russian forces seemed to point to this and he understood that an advance through Roumania was extremely difficult for any other than small forces. An advance through Roumania would also be a threat to Poland which the latter could hardly ignore.

13. It was certain that the present moment was the worst possible one in which the Soviet Army would have to fight. It was just conceivable that if the present purge could be brought to an end the Army might have recovered within a comparatively short time as Russians did not seem to be permanently affected by purges, at all events to the same extent as other nations.

14. I then said that one must be strongly realist in dealing with Russian matters. That there was no good hoping vainly that the Russians might be of some value as a counterpoise to the Germans when the balance of probability seemed to be altogether on the other side. We must not, however, forget that the Russians were Asiatics, more so now than at any period since the time of Peter the Great, and that with the present Byzantine régime in the Kremlin anything might happen. I felt, however, that even a partial military adventure or demonstration on their part was improbable. There were nevertheless so many imponderable factors that it was impossible to give any opinion at present which might not become entirely vitiated at a future date when the Soviet army had time to reorganize and recover from the effects of the purges.

15. I confess to being slightly mystified as to the motives underlying M. Coulondre's invitation for I have always understood that he is usually reserved and uncommunicative. It may be that he has insufficient confidence in his own Military Attaché, who was not present, and he certainly appeared to pay great attention to what Colonel Firebrace said, but whatever his motives may have been I feel that his main object was simply to clear his mind and to be able to go to Paris fortified by an independent and unbiassed third party opinion.

16. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Berlin, Paris and Prague.

I have, etc.

G. VEREKER

No. 223

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 18, 3.0 p.m.)*

*No. 128 Telegraphic [C 4466/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 17, 1938<sup>1</sup>

I had an audience May 17 lasting over three hours.

I told the President that I was having some difficulty in convincing you that Czechoslovak Government were prepared to go far and fast enough in seeking a settlement of Sudeten German question.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram is dated May 17; the hour of despatch was noon on May 18.

I understood moreover that Reich Government were very mistrustful of sincerity of Czechoslovakian intentions and have intimated that if matters continued as they were and incidents occurred leading to bloodshed they would act forthwith whatever the consequences. At the same time they had not rejected our approach to them in this matter. In reply M. Benes asked me to give you his most categorical, formal and sincere assurances that Czechoslovak Government are convinced of necessity of coming to an agreement without delay. It was their most earnest will to settle the question as quickly as possible and without any mental reservations. What His Majesty's Government were doing was very highly appreciated and he, M. Benes, personally was most grateful for the assistance which it gave him in coping with opposition at home.

I asked when and what action would be taken. M. Benes said that discussions with political parties were not quite completed but Herr Henlein personally would be invited to meet President of Council at latest by the end of next week. During the most part of our conversation, however, the President gave me the impression that attitude of Government would be rather that of explaining to Herr Henlein what they were prepared to do than of initiating serious negotiations. I repeated to the President the representations made to Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 7, informed him of your disappointment with Dr. Krofta's first reaction and read to him my report of the more satisfactory statement made to me by President of the Council as recorded in third paragraph of my telegram No. 117<sup>2</sup> adding also substance of fourth paragraph. At frequent intervals during conversation I insisted on importance of striking while the iron was hot and said that the psychological moment had arrived which if used might lead to a real settlement and if missed would probably end in disaster. I spoke to him also in the sense of last paragraph of your telegram No. 85<sup>3</sup> and urged him to act if possible this week.

The President replied that so far as he was concerned the invitation could be issued at once but he was not a dictator. In reply to my rather anxious enquiry he assured me that he had no doubt that concurrence of parties would be forthcoming and perhaps even by the end of this week.

I think I shook him somewhat and may in particular have changed his attitude in regard to negotiations. In reply to my enquiries I gathered that procedure to be followed when President of the Council and Herr Henlein met had not been laid down or perhaps even considered. In trying to elucidate it I showed that I myself assumed that there would be a genuine round table give and take negotiation. Towards the end of our conversation I got him to say that invitation to Henlein would be to negotiate and exchange views with the object of achieving a comprehensive settlement. President remained unwilling to admit in so many words that basis of negotiation should be a 'state of nationalities' but repeated that abandonment of 'a national state' would be a practical result of measures he had in mind. M. Benes showed no inclination to discuss points in Henlein's Carlsbad speech

<sup>2</sup> No. 204.

<sup>3</sup> No. 220.



and still less to come out with an offer dealing with these points which did not seem to cause him any great concern. He was presumably in possession of a reassuring report from Czechoslovak Minister in London who had, said M. Benes, already in a sense initiated negotiations by his interview with Herr Henlein. When I took the eight points up myself President explained that two and three, i.e. the incorporation of Sudeten Germans as a legal body and legal establishment of German areas within the state were inadmissible but that both these two points and number five, i.e. legal protection outside national areas would be met substantially by guarantees which Government were prepared to give against de-nationalisation.

Nor did he think that number six, i.e. reparation, or number eight the profession of National Socialism would cause serious difficulty. In fact he said the party leaders felt they had made a mistake in subscribing to National Socialism and were already trying to explain it away.

As I left I again impressed on M. Benes the vital necessity of seizing the present opportunity.

Further reports follow.<sup>4</sup>

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin and Rome.

<sup>4</sup> On May 20 Mr. Newton was informed that the language which he had used in the interviews reported in Nos. 192, 204, and 223, was approved, and that the Secretary of State wished to express his appreciation of the manner in which he (Mr. Newton) was 'handling this most delicate matter'.

## No. 224

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)*

*No. 140 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4540/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 17, 1938

A manifesto has been published under the signature of several hundred leading Czech intellectuals calling upon all true citizens and political parties to maintain their unity and their traditions of freedom and democracy. Only thus will independence be upheld. All the rights guaranteed by an indivisible State will gladly be shared with the fellow-citizens of other nationality, and peace and understanding is desired with all neighbours. But none may be allowed to serve foreign interest or to disturb internal unity, and the present foreign policy must be maintained. There is no place to-day for defeatists and the country should be ruled only by true democrats. The Government should use its whole power to defend the Republic and democracy.

The fact that signatories of this appeal include many well known names in every walk of artistic and intellectual life lends importance to it. It reflects a division of outlook which broadly resembles that obtaining at home. Here as in England there is a powerful left wing largely led by intellectuals whose motto is 'No surrender to dictators'. The present manifesto is clearly aimed at those such as Agrarian Party and the President of the Council himself

who are regarded as waverers and defeatists. With this powerful force of educated opinion urging the Government to stand fast it is clear that the path of concessions to Henlein is not an easy one for the Government to follow. Nor can Henlein leaders be accused of making it easier.

Translation follows by post.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 225

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 18)*

*No. 192 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4465/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 18, 1938

Herr Hitler is expected back in Berlin to-day. According to a member of his staff neither Chancery nor Ministry of Foreign Affairs has any information whatever of his views and intentions regarding Czechoslovakian question.

I hear from another source in touch with Nazi Party that extremists are pressing for an immediate show-down in confident hope that Western Powers will once more accept *fait accompli*. This is confirmed by French Consul-General in Munich who was told by highly placed person in Brown House that Czechoslovakian question would be settled next month.

There is some hope of my being able to exercise moderating influence here if I keep in touch with the German Government as continuously and closely as possible. For this reason I trust you will authorise me to say something to Herr von Ribbentrop in response to his request in ante-penultimate paragraph of my telegram No. 185.<sup>1</sup>

Official at Ministry referred to in paragraph 1 stated that German Government genuinely appreciated British step at Prague and would welcome rather than repel further British efforts to secure an agreed settlement on German lines. I am alive to danger of adopting a more forward policy. But against such objections and dangers must be weighed constant risk of an outbreak. I fear that if left entirely to themselves Henlein or M. Benes will never reach a settlement.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 206.

#### No. 226

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 19)*

*No. 129 Telegraphic [C 4512/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 18, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

President seemed confident and if anything perhaps a shade too confident in his ability to achieve a settlement. He stated he had behind him great

<sup>1</sup> No. 223.

majority of the Czechs and Slovaks but was experiencing difficulty with the press and some of small party officials. The Catholic party was being obstinate, led by Dr. Sramek who was one of the few remaining leaders . . .<sup>2</sup> and for that very reason had considerable influence. He must also have regard to the attitude of intellectuals such as those who had published manifesto reported in my telegram No. 140 Saving.<sup>3</sup> This would have been couched in much stronger terms had it not been for exercise of his personal influence.

The authority of the State must of course be maintained and he had to make orders for its reassertion where it had been temporarily relaxed. The reassertion would be in stages beginning with mixed areas in which Czech population was in majority, continuing with those where there was a slight German majority but general economic and other conditions were satisfactory, and ending with the most extreme German districts. The first stage had already begun and according to his reports had been satisfactory. There had been minor incidents but last Sunday might prove to be high water mark of pre-election feeling and demonstrations and had passed off comparatively well. Herr Kundt and other Sudeten leaders had made moderating speeches and the President's information was that the leaders now wanted an agreement. He thought too they would lose ground, later if not at once, should they fail to take advantage of great concessions which the Government were prepared to grant. The Government would of course negotiate also with the other nationalities concerned including their respective activists. For example, there was a Magyar activist party. Parliament would not start its summer holidays until necessary legislation had been enacted.

As a reassuring scrap of evidence M. Benes told me that a map of the future Reich hung in Field-Marshal Göring's study and did not include Sudeten areas. At some point in our conversation President remarked changes would have to take place within the framework of the Constitution. In reply to my enquiry whether the Constitution need be so sacrosanct if it were a question of maintaining the integrity and independence of the State, M. Benes assured me that necessary changes could be effected within the present Constitution. Changes of a written constitution could rarely be made, he pointed out, without a revolution. He feared that already some inclined in London to favour what he described as schematic conceptions by which he seemed to mean theoretical schemes of federalism or autonomy or other varieties of Government. In practice by his proposals the nationalities would be able to get substance of their legitimate claims, e.g. they would be given safeguards against . . .<sup>2</sup> nationalization, would enjoy almost complete school autonomy and a greater . . .<sup>2</sup> equal nationality than existed in any other countries by obtaining in addition to local self-administration the right to participate to the full extent of their proportional integrity [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> in the state administration. In particular M. Benes mentioned that control of police would be restored to local authorities subject to such controls as might be in the interest of the State.

At another stage in our long conversation when I was repeating last part

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> No. 224.

of representations first made to Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 7 M. Benes made one or two notes of concluding suggestions. In particular he seemed to note the belief of His Majesty's Government that a settlement would require a broader foundation than hitherto contemplated and their doubt that proposals communicated to them represented any great advance upon<sup>4</sup> a 'state of nationalities'.

A lengthy statement by President on his foreign policy is being reported separately by bag.<sup>5</sup> Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin and Rome.

<sup>4</sup> This word appears to be a mistake for 'towards'.

<sup>5</sup> See No. 229.

## No. 227

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 19)*

*No. 130 Telegraphic [C 4475/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 18, 1938

My telegrams Nos. 129 and 130 [*sic*].<sup>1</sup>

The efforts being made in London, Paris, Berlin and Prague may have stopped Czechoslovakian car from running down hill but start of real and continuous progress up hill has not yet begun. It would no doubt greatly help to overcome dead point and impart momentum if your Lordship could receive Czechoslovakian Minister in London and perhaps inform him somewhat to the effect that much as you have appreciated assurances received from them, you remained uneasy lest Czechoslovakian Government might yet fail to go either as far as or, what was probably even more important at this juncture, as fast as was necessary to take advantage of an opportunity likely to be vital for future of Czechoslovakia. Your uneasiness would rapidly grow if there were now any delay in going from words to conciliatory deeds.

When M. Benes spoke to me of restraints imposed by a democratic system I replied that in my country these were fully appreciated but if at a vital moment democratic leaders failed to act or as was indeed the same thing failed to act in time such a failure could not be excused as democratic but would mean the bankruptcy of democracy. I also asked M. Benes whether it might not make a good start for negotiations if he were to receive [*? Herr Henlein*].<sup>2</sup> He replied that Henlein would be received by President of the Council and that he himself would be quite prepared to receive him but it would have to be on condition that reception registered success in direction of conciliation and could be taken as a public sign that a decisive stage had been accomplished along the road towards co-operation.

Repeated to Berlin and Rome. Please repeat to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> The reference appears to be to Nos. 223 and 226.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

No. 228

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 19)*  
*No. 132 Telegraphic [C 4477/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 18, 1938

(? My telegram No. 131).<sup>1</sup>

A message has just been telephoned to me from President of Council to tell me informally that he is in permanent contact with Parliamentary leaders of Sudeten German Party and that he has now invited Henlein to meet him next week.

I was requested to telegraph this to you at once but as an unofficial confidential message.

The above intimation which may be an early sequel to my audience of yesterday is satisfactory as far as it goes but does not affect suggestion in my above-mentioned telegram except to the extent that you might care to express to Czechoslovak Minister your satisfaction at receipt of this informal message.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> This reference was subsequently corrected to telegram No. 130: No. 227.

No. 229

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)*  
*No. 148 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4528/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 18, 1938

My telegrams Nos. 128 to 130.<sup>1</sup>

President Benes gave me an important exposition of his foreign policy when I had finished my recital of the representations made to the Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 7.

In the first place he observed that the view of the military and economic situation of Czechoslovakia taken by His Majesty's Government was so black that the conclusion might be drawn that the only thing was to accept German domination with as good a grace as possible. He warned me that such a policy was already advocated by a certain small section in, I gathered, the Agrarian party.

Dr. Benes continued that he considered that it was vital to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with Germany by which he seemed to mean as a minimum good neighbourly relations. For seventeen years it had been recognised at Geneva and elsewhere that the minorities treaties were fully observed and the minorities themselves better treated in Czechoslovakia than anywhere else and Czechoslovakia had remained out of the picture of international politics. Her relations with the Reich and with her Sudeten population had been quite satisfactory until the National Socialist régime came to power in

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 223, 226, and 227.



Germany. Dr. Benes continued that he had tried on every possible occasion to establish good relations with the Reich, his only condition being that Czechoslovakia should remain in intimate contact with Western Europe. The peace of Europe could not be preserved unless Germany realised that the genuine independence of the small countries in Central Europe and especially of Czechoslovakia was going to be maintained. The alternative for Czechoslovakia would be to accept the hegemony of Germany and renounce her connexion with Western Europe which would mean that in some future war she would have to enter the conflict as a German slave. It was therefore the fundamental principle of his country to remain bound to Western Europe.

Czechoslovakia's relations with Russia had always been and would remain a secondary consideration, dependent on the attitude of France and Great Britain. Czechoslovakia's present connexion with Russia was purely contingent on the Franco-Russian treaty but if Western Europe disinterested herself in Russia, Czechoslovakia would also be disinterested. His country, he repeated, would always follow and be bound to Western Europe and never to Eastern Europe. Any connexion with Russia would only be through Western Europe and Czechoslovakia would refuse to be an instrument of Russian policy. These had always been the principles of the policy of President Masaryk and of himself and, said President Benes, speaking with serious emphasis, they would remain his principles.

Czechoslovakia, he continued, took an objective view of the value of Russia. He thought we might be inclined to underrate the importance of Russia but this was a different point and did not affect the foregoing statement of the policy of Czechoslovakia.

As regards Germany, President Benes said that he refused to accept the discouraging conclusion, which might have been drawn from my review of the weakness of the position, that Czechoslovakia would be well advised to accept German hegemony. He realised, however, that Czechoslovakia should establish the best relations possible with the Reich, but in agreement with the Western Powers. If a bilateral treaty were concluded it must be guaranteed or witnessed by the Western Powers (cf. my telegram No. 47<sup>2</sup> of March 20). Czechoslovakia must either accept German domination or continue in intimate connexion with Western Europe, guaranteed by France and the object of British interest. At this point I reminded him of the limitations of British interest as defined in the Prime Minister's speech. Dr. Benes said that he was satisfied that England was sufficiently realistic to know that if Germany dominated Central Europe Great Britain herself would in due course be seriously and fundamentally menaced. Czechoslovakia could not go on living under a perpetual menace. He did not believe, however, that the Reich had any definite plan or was other than opportunist while the retention of the Sudeten population in Czechoslovakia would be a safeguard for her against any hostile Czechoslovak policy. The domination of Czechoslovakia by Germany would be a first step towards the domination of Europe

<sup>2</sup> No. 99.

and European equilibrium could not be established unless Central European States were able to feel themselves to be as independent as Belgium, the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries. He recognised Germany's economic interests in Central Europe but this need be no obstacle to the maintenance of political independence.

Dr. Benes made the further point that the interest taken by Western Europe in the independence of Czechoslovakia and of Central Europe formed a satisfactory counterpart to, or check on, Russian policy and would prevent any undue penetration by Russia. He had been, he said, always opposed to a Pan-Slav policy and to excessive Russian influence in Central Europe. He was a Westerner but did not wish to exclude Russia from Europe where she might be a useful make-weight against German pressure. Similarly he believed that France and England needed Russia as a balancing factor. An attempt to exclude Russia completely from Europe would, he believed, be disastrous and would only force her to make an agreement with Germany against the rest of Europe.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Rome.

#### No. 230

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)*

*No. 39 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4537/1941/18]*

WARSAW, May 18, 1938

My telegram No. 36<sup>1</sup> of May 8.

I have had a further conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding Czechoslovakia. I had previously seen the Polish Ambassador in London and frankly told him what a lamentable impression the attitude of certain sections of the Polish press and public opinion had made in England. I therefore suggested that he should speak to M. Beck seriously on the subject before leaving for London yesterday.

M. Beck to-day referred to his recent conversation with the Czechoslovak Minister which I reported in my telegram under reference, and stated that he attached great importance to the assurance which he had now received for the first time that the Czechoslovak Government would grant to the Polish minority any concessions granted to the Sudeten. This marked a great step in advance and he was highly satisfied at having received it. As regards Komintern propaganda he had referred the Czechoslovak proposal for police collaboration to the Ministry of the Interior and other departments concerned. He reminded me that the air service between Poland and Hungary regarding which the Czechoslovak Government had now waived their objections would at present be confined only to Hungarian machines. Other negotiations with the Czechoslovak Government had not yet reached a stage on which it was possible to pronounce any opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a statement by the Czechoslovak Minister at Warsaw to Sir H. Kennard that he had had 'a relatively satisfactory and cordial conversation' with M. Beck.

I drew His Excellency's attention to the fact that I had heard that rumours were being spread from German sources (see for instance 'The Times' of May 14) that Czechoslovakia had nothing to fear from German aggressive intentions but that Poland was more likely to precipitate matters. I added that while there had been some slight improvement in the attitude of the Polish press of late I hoped that he would bear in mind the necessity for restraining extreme elements here as it now seemed likely that Poland would be able to attain all her legitimate desiderata without further complicating the delicate situation by overt hostility to Czechoslovakia.

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me that he is to see the Czechoslovak Minister again this week before he leaves for Stockholm and I shall ascertain from M. Slawik whether he may have had anything of interest to say to him.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

### No. 231

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 19, 8.30 p.m.)

*No. 134 Telegraphic [C 4513/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 19, 1938, 7.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 129.<sup>1</sup>

2. It is announced that at yesterday's meeting of Political Committee of Cabinet, Minister of Interior gave report on measures adopted to preserve order and restore state authority and also on steps taken to carry out Cabinet's recent decision on subject of terrorisation (my Savingram No. 136).<sup>2</sup>

3. To-day's press reports large crop of incidents and Sudeten Senator complained bitterly at yesterday's meeting of Senate of brutality of Czech soldiery. It seems that situation looked ugly for time on May 17 at Trebnitz near Leitmeritz where German gymnastic association held demonstration and marched through streets shouting 'Sieg heil' and 'Heil Hitler'. In this case however it was Czech population and not authorities who took objection.

Repeated to Berlin. Please repeat to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

#### CHAPTER IV

The crisis of May 19-22: consideration by His Majesty's Government of the possibility of an International Commission in the event of a breakdown in the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein: Mr. Strang's visit to Prague and Berlin

(May 19-30, 1938)

#### No. 232

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 19, 7.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 193 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4514/65/18]*

BERLIN, May 19, 1938

Acting Consul at Dresden reports that he has strong reason to believe that German troops are concentrating in Southern Silesia and Northern Austria. Leave suspended next Sunday.

I am asking him to telegraph to you source of his information.

Movement and suspension of Sunday leave may be connected with elections that day.

There is no evidence here of any abnormal military preparation.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Vienna and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson had reported on May 11 that the Military Attaché had seen the Commander of the Armoured Corps with three generals of the Tank Corps and two senior Tank Staff officers in Dresden on May 10. There was, however, no sign of tank concentration, and the Attaché thought that the party was probably making a reconnaissance tour of the frontier.

#### No. 233

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received May 20, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 194 Telegraphic [C 4518/65/18]*

BERLIN, May 19, 1938, 8.45 p.m.

Following received from Munich telegram No. 8 May 19.

A British subject came specifically from Garmisch to-day to report that a waitress at hotel where he is well known told him yesterday that soldiers from the district are being moved during the weekend to Czech frontier in order

to be ready for elections. My French colleague has also heard rumours of concentration of troops on the frontier.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On May 25 Sir N. Henderson reported further information, received through H.M. Consul-General at Munich, from the same source pointing to military preparations during the previous week in the neighbourhood of Garmisch.

## No. 234

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)*

*No. 250 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4541/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 19, 1938

Position in regard to Sudeten question here as I see it is as follows:—

1. Herr Hitler has welcomed our good offices at Prague partly because he is inclined to believe in our sincerity and partly because he himself also desires a peaceful solution, since he shrinks from big risk of armed intervention at this moment, particularly in view of possibility of British participation in any war which might ensue. Austria is not yet digested, the German army not yet ready for all eventualities and Four-Year Plan far from its maximum development.

2. Nevertheless, if serious incident were to occur in Czechoslovakia, Germany will—however reluctantly—face great risks involved including British participation and intervene with armed force regardless of them. In German eyes question of principle is involved, namely that of nationality (Volkstum) and inalienable right which they claim to protect people of German blood. In the event of a serious incident Sudeten appeal for intervention would be irresistible. There is, I beg you to believe, no bluff in announced intention of Germany to intervene in case of serious bloodshed. In that eventuality events will be stronger than individuals and Hitler himself will not be able to afford to sit still and do nothing.

3. Undoubtedly Nazi extremists are egging on Sudeten in spite of moderating counsels from above and unwillingness of responsible leaders to provoke a conflict before they are ready. The real danger therefore is a *coup* on part of the Sudeten youth who are only too willing to precipitate a conflict on their behalf. What is not yet appreciated elsewhere is the intense Germanism of the Sudeten themselves, who fail to see why they should be sacrificed in order to preserve balance of power in Europe. Though it falls naturally into pan-German scheme of things the crux of the problem is not between Berlin and Prague so much as between Sudeten Germans and Czechs and the fact that whatever happens seven million Czechs cannot hope permanently to compel 3½ million Sudeten to remain subservient to them.

4. The German Government are alive to this reality and are consequently willing (for reasons given in paragraph 1) to hold their hand for the time being provided Henlein can arrange now for such measure of autonomy and self-administration for the Sudeten as will enable them without great difficulty or risk of war peacefully to vote themselves, if they so desire, into the



Reich at a later date. However unpleasant that prospect it has to be faced, always with the hope that in the event, once they are self-administering the Sudeten may after all elect to remain cocks on their own little dunghill within the Czechoslovak State.

5. German Government to-day therefore is awaiting result of British advice at Prague. It would, however, be grave mistake to count on our moderating counsels at Berlin proving effective, even if backed by threat of war, if we support Czech proposals which fail approximately to satisfy Henlein's demands.

Repeated to Prague.

No. 235

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)*

*No. 251 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4542/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 19, 1938

Czechoslovak Minister called on me on his return from Prague. He assured me that he had come back convinced of Benes's determination to come to a comprehensive agreement. I told him that German Government doubted latter's good faith and strongly advised him to see Ribbentrop himself and to speak to him in same sense as he had done to me. He said that he would do so but begged me at same time to assure you that Benes, in spite of his difficult position, was fully alive to the necessity for Europe of a peaceful solution. I told him that, while we fully realised the difficulties, what His Majesty's Government was hoping for was acts not verbal assurances.

I again repeated to him that I felt that no time was to be lost. In my opinion, however serious the possible consequences and however unfavourable the moment, Germany would act at once if there were a serious incident. She would, I feared, not even be deterred by the risk of war with Britain. It was the impatience of the Sudeten youth of which I was apprehensive, not the German Government, though there were obviously many young Nazi extremists here who were actively trying to stir up trouble. The fact, however unpalatable, was that Czechoslovakia had nothing to gain and stood to lose everything by delay. I had not personally been very favourably impressed by Benes's written answer to the British and French *démarche*: what was it in fact that he proposed to do?

M. Mastny replied that once the May elections were over, the nationality statute would be submitted to Parliament. I said that I hoped that it would be first discussed with Henlein. As Mastny indicated that it might merely be shown to latter, I argued that that would be fatal error since negotiation was essential beforehand and Henlein less extreme than his followers. Mastny said that he personally agreed and hinted that after the Prime Minister had seen Henlein the latter might also be received by President Benes.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Prague, Rome and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Sir N. Henderson was informed by telegram at 11 p.m. on May 22 that his language to M. Mastny was approved.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20, 2.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 135 Telegraphic [C 4547/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 20, 11.25 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 129<sup>2</sup> second paragraph and Berlin telegram No. 246<sup>3</sup> Saving last sentence.

The Czech press of all parties has lately been strongly urging the Government to take stern measures. It is moreover obvious that the State cannot afford to allow its authority to lose all respect in German and mixed areas and that the longer discipline is relaxed the more difficult its reassertion will be. Nor would surrender of its authority help Czechoslovak Government for long in their difficulties with Sudetens who would only be encouraged to demand a more complete degree of autonomy and to treat the Prague Government with increasing contempt.

The Reich Government too might well take the line that Czechs having patently failed in the first duty of a Government, they themselves were entitled to intervene to restore or keep order either at the request of Henlein or indeed without it. In fact if Germans are out for trouble they can have it easily in either way. If Czechs maintain order and bloodshed results, Herr Hitler will 'act like lightning'. If they do not, they are not fit to govern and must give place to those who can. Before these gloomy alternatives I feel the Czechs are probably right in their decision especially as in its heart no race has a greater real respect for order and authority than the Germans.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 231.

<sup>2</sup> No. 226.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a message from Prague printed in the 'Völkischer Beobachter' of May 17. The last sentence of the message (and of the telegram) ran as follows: 'One is entitled to say that a crisis confronts the authority of the State in the Sudeten German area.'

## No. 237

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*No. 195 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4530/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 20, 1938, 11.30 a.m.

The tone of the press to-day is noticeably sharper in regard to Czechoslovakia. No new facts or arguments are adduced.

In an interesting message sent out last night by the Transocean News Service the following passage occurred:—

'All signs indicate that in the near future the German Government will intervene in the international discussion on the Czechoslovak question begun by the Anglo-French step in Prague. The impatience of German political

circles at the slow progress of the measures taken by the Czechoslovak Government to solve this burning European question is growing from day to day. . . . It is noticeable that since the 'Anschluss' the fate of the Sudetens is being discussed with growing indignation by all sections of the German people. In political circles at Berlin the fundamental position of Germany towards the Czechoslovak problem is summarised as follows:—

(1) Question of nationalities in Czechoslovak[ia] is no internal problem but an international question.

(2) The fact that  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Germans are Czechoslovak citizens means that the influence of Berlin on the solution of the question must be greater than that of London and Paris who have already begun by their *démarche* in Prague to make their influence felt.

(3) It is intolerable that through the Czechoslovak-Soviet military alliance a military jumping off place should be created for bolshevism in the heart of Central Europe. It is precisely this military alliance which in the German opinion creates the Czechoslovak problem.'

It will be noticed that the above message, which I believe to have been inspired in some official quarter or other, abandons the thesis that the Czechoslovak question is a matter to be settled between Henlein and the Czechoslovak Government.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

## No. 238

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20, 12.35 p.m.)*  
*No. 137 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4536/65/18]*

PRAGUE, May 20, 1938

Ministry of Foreign Affairs have just telephoned that information which is believed to be well founded has reached Czechoslovak Government of a concentration of troops in Saxony. German Minister at Prague has been asked if he can elucidate. Czechoslovak Government are also uneasy in regard to German troop movements in Bavaria which do not, however, so far as is yet known amount to a concentration.<sup>1</sup>

Repeated Berlin, Rome, Paris, Warsaw, Belgrade, Bucharest.

<sup>1</sup> On Lord Halifax's instructions Sir N. Henderson was informed by telephone of this telegram and instructed that, if he considered it desirable, he might mention the matter at his interview with Herr von Ribbentrop. Sir N. Henderson replied by telephone that he had already made inquiries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He then gave the substance of his later telegram (No. 240).

In a later telegram (2.10 p.m.) of May 20 Mr. Newton stated that the information included the report of the movement of Hungarian troops to the Slovak frontier near Esztergom.

At 2 p.m. on May 20 H.M. Consul-General at Vienna reported that there were no 'very unusual signs of military preparations' at Vienna, but that '100 lorries conveying signal troops had been observed proceeding towards the frontier'.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 161 Telegraphic [C 4465/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1938, 2.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 192.<sup>1</sup>

I agree that it is desirable to maintain contact with the German Government on this subject. You may therefore take an early opportunity of informing the Minister for Foreign Affairs in general terms of the following developments.

(1) In Paragraph 5 of your telegram No. 185<sup>2</sup> you reported Herr von Ribbentrop as begging His Majesty's Government to bring home to the French Government the serious nature of the situation that would arise if no settlement were reached. Sir A. Cadogan passed on Herr von Ribbentrop's observations to the French Ambassador on May 17.

(2) As you will have seen from Prague telegram No. 128<sup>3</sup> His Majesty's Minister has also passed this warning on to President Benes.

(3) His Majesty's Minister has now spoken not only to the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, and President of the Council, but also to the President. The French Minister has made representations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and President of the Council and is intending to repeat them to the President.

(4) According to paragraph 4 of your telegram No. 185, the German Government's view is that this is an internal question for Czechoslovakia and that responsibility as to the lines of a satisfactory settlement rests entirely with Herr Henlein. Advice which His Majesty's Government have been giving to the Czechoslovak Government is precisely to the effect that Czechoslovak Government should enter into direct negotiations with Henlein Party with the least possible delay. President Benes has assured His Majesty's Minister that Czechoslovak Government are convinced of necessity of coming to an early agreement and earnestly desire to settle question as quickly as possible. We understand that there will be early contact between the two parties.

(5) His Majesty's Government hope and believe that on his side Herr Henlein will respond and enter into these negotiations in a reasonable spirit.

Repeated to Prague, Rome<sup>4</sup> and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 225.

<sup>2</sup> No. 206.

<sup>3</sup> No. 223.

<sup>4</sup> In a further telegram (No. 314) Lord Perth was instructed that he could inform Count Ciano in confidence of 'recent developments as regards Czechoslovakia as described in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5' of No. 239.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20, 6.50 p.m.)  
No. 198 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4583/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 20, 1938

Prague telegram No. 137<sup>1</sup> and my telegrams Nos. 193<sup>2</sup> and 194.<sup>3</sup>

I called on State Secretary this afternoon and drew his attention to these indications of German military activity in Saxony. State Secretary described the rumours as nonsense since, as he said, Germany had no ulterior designs, but rang up Ministry of War in my presence and mentioned my enquiry which is being referred to General Keitel, Chief of Staff of German army.<sup>4</sup>

I alluded to the dangers of the situation and encouragement which is being given here to extremists by the present Franco-Italian tension. State Secretary's reply was that whereas extremists here or among Sudeten were not at the helm, there were some Czech extremists who were on the other hand very close to the helm. Germany wanted a peaceful solution and so did Henlein but the German Government were receiving constant reports of growing feeling among the Czechs that it would be better to provoke a serious crisis now when the situation might assist them rather than later when it was not so favourable.

In reply to this I recounted to State Secretary what the Czechoslovak Minister had told me as regards M. Benes's good faith and determination to find a peaceful issue (see my telegram No. 251 Saving of May 19).<sup>5</sup> My assurances had however I fear little effect on State Secretary whose former contacts with M. Benes in Geneva had clearly prejudiced him against that statesman.

Whatever the reply of Ministry of War which is scarcely likely to be other than of a reassuring nature, I hope my enquiry may at least have some effect. Nevertheless if there were a really serious incident on Sunday during the elections I have no doubt myself but that Herr Hitler would give orders for the German troops to cross the frontier immediately.

Repeated to Prague, Paris and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> No. 238.

<sup>2</sup> No. 232.

<sup>3</sup> No. 233.

<sup>4</sup> In two further telegrams (Nos. 199 and 200) telephoned respectively at 6.50 p.m. and 7.20 p.m.) Sir N. Henderson reported (i) that 'State Secretary has just telephoned to say that General Keitel describes rumours of troop concentration as absolutely nonsense. No troops have been assembled in Saxony: only at Königsbruck are there more troops than usual—only on account of normal annual exercises.' (ii) that he (Sir N. Henderson) had reminded the State Secretary that on March 11 the Military Attaché had been told at the Ministry of War, in answer to his enquiry about movements against Austria, that there was no truth in the rumours of such movements, although in fact the troops had been ordered to march on the previous night. Sir N. Henderson asked the State Secretary, 'who undoubtedly took it to heart', to remind General Keitel of this when giving an answer this afternoon.

<sup>5</sup> No. 235.



No. 241

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 9.30 a.m.)  
*No. 144 Telegraphic [C 4634/1941/18]*

PARIS, May 20, 1938, 8.55 p.m.

M. de Brinon the well known journalist told a member of my staff that he had lately been to Germany where he had seen General Göring who had told him that the Czech affair would be liquidated this summer, amicably, if Benes saw reason, but liquidated. If there was any blood-letting (Brinon said that Czech police had not changed their overbearing methods up to last week) it would be impossible to hold in the Germans. He said that he had told M. Daladier this [? this] morning. Brinon of course is known for his pro-German propensities but he seemed genuinely alarmed.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

No. 242

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*<sup>1</sup>  
*No. 238 [C 4589/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1938

Sir,

I asked the Czechoslovak Minister to call to see me this morning, on the ground that I was going away for a day or two and should much like to hear before I left anything that he might have to tell me. He said that his Government were fully seized of the urgency of getting into direct touch with Herr Henlein while he was still in the reasonable mind in which his London visit had left him, and that an invitation to meet M. Hodza had been issued to him for the purpose of negotiation of a possible settlement. The elections were being held on Sunday, and it was, therefore, hoped that such a meeting might be held on Tuesday or Wednesday next week. I impressed upon M. Masaryk our sense of the extreme importance of urgent action and of treating the matters concerned, when the meeting took place between the Government and Herr Henlein, as matters for negotiation rather than on lines of confronting Herr Henlein with a Government offer, of which the main features were finally decided in advance. He said that he could completely reassure me on both these points and that he had advised his Government to make no reference at all to questions of foreign policy at this stage.

2. I suggested to M. Masaryk that, in view of the desirability of doing everything possible to lower the temperature, it would be advisable that the issue of an invitation to Herr Henlein to a meeting with the Government should be given early and wide publicity. He promised to make the suggestion to Prague at once. He was not unhopeful of progress, but feared that the

<sup>1</sup> A summary of this interview was telegraphed to Mr. Newton (as telegram No. 92) on May 20.

situation had been made more difficult by Signor Mussolini's Genoa speech<sup>2</sup> and by the inevitable French reactions to it.

3. Finally, in response to some reference on his part to the polemics of the German press, I told M. Masaryk that I would consider whether we could usefully ask His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin to take an opportunity of stressing the importance at this moment of moderation in German press quarters.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

<sup>2</sup> In this speech on May 14 Signor Mussolini, referring to Franco-Italian relations, had emphasized that France and Italy were 'on different sides of the barricades' in Spain.

No. 243

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 1055 [C 4588/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1938

Sir,

M. Paul Reynaud<sup>1</sup> called to see me this morning in the course of the short visit that he is paying to this country, and we discussed Czechoslovakia. I told M. Reynaud in general terms of the action we had taken both at Berlin and Prague. With this, of course, he was generally familiar, and was glad to learn what I was able to tell him of the impression created here by Herr Henlein's visit. I said that, in our judgment, speed was of the essence of the problem, and that we had put all the pressure we could on the Czechoslovak Government to get into direct touch with Herr Henlein as early as possible. M. Reynaud said the French Government fully agreed with all this, but they were none the less much concerned at the possibility of trouble arising, either by way of direct German incursion or by way of the employment of the new technique of assistance being rendered to an insurgent minority.

2. In any development that imposed the fulfilment of French obligations to Czechoslovakia, the French must inevitably and immediately take action. I told him that we fully realised the situation in which they were placed and we fully appreciated the consequences that this might, in certain circumstances, have. As to the British position, this had been defined by the Prime Minister on the 24th March, and there was nothing that I could add to it, except to say that, the more the matter was considered, the more urgent seemed to me to be the necessity of finding an early settlement by which it might be hoped these dangers could be avoided. M. Reynaud, in forecasting the possible developments of German action in the south-east of Europe, said that he was anxious about the great reinforcement of strength that such action might bring to Germany, both in supplies and man-power. Where should the French look for another army to redress the balance? Poland? Uncertain. Russia? A great war potential, but again, for reasons with which we were all familiar, uncertain. He would like, if he could, to feel that a British arm

<sup>1</sup> Deputy President of the Council and Minister of Justice.

would be available. I repeated to him what we had felt it necessary to say to the French Ministers when they were over here, and said that I feared this must remain the position of this country, and that the probable assistance, therefore, that in any circumstances we could render must be by sea and air. I told M. Reynaud, however, that, as I understood he was having lunch with the Secretary of State for War, he would, no doubt, be able to discuss the particular matters affecting the army with him.

3. I proceeded to put two considerations to the Minister which seemed to me relevant to the general picture that he had drawn. While it might be true that, however we developed our industrial production in the next year or two, we could not count upon overtaking the German armament effort, I thought we could reasonably look to placing ourselves in such a position that Germany could no longer contemplate any war with France and ourselves without having to face very hard knocks herself in return for knocks, possibly even harder, that she would administer to us. In other words, whatever the precise balance of strength might be, I thought we could place ourselves in such a position as to make Germany think two or three times before embarking upon such an adventure. I always supposed that the one thing the Germans must have learned was that no war was likely to be profitable unless it was a very quick one.

4. The other consideration that I suggested to him was that, having regard to the military difficulties of giving direct assistance to Czechoslovakia or other countries in South-East Europe, it seemed to me that examination of doing something on the economic side acquired an added interest and importance. I could not suppose that, even in the event of Germany endeavouring to carry out all the sinister designs that might be attributed to her in Central and South-Eastern Europe, she would find her task free from serious difficulty when she came to deal with populations never too easy to manage and imbued with strong nationalist feeling. Austria was not necessarily a pattern for what might happen elsewhere. If, therefore, it was possible for France and ourselves gradually to create some *points d'appui* for the smaller countries on the economic side, such action might be expected to exercise considerable influence upon political developments. M. Reynaud appeared to be in warm agreement with this line of thought and said that he thought such a policy, if it proved practicable, associated with firm language in Berlin upon the dangers involved in rough treatment of delicate questions, was the best line that could be developed as things now stood.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 244

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 142 Telegraphic [C 4637/65/18]

PRAGUE, May 21,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 12.30 a.m.

My telegram No. 137.<sup>2</sup>

Latest reports received by Czechoslovak General Staff are to the effect that German 7th and 17th infantry divisions are advancing in the direction of Bavarian-Czechoslovak frontier. First and second squadrons of [? Lübeck] 52nd Fliegerregiment stationed at Neubrandenburg have been identified in Saxony and aircraft belonging to this regiment have carried out deliberate flights over North Bohemian territory both singly and in formation. Nine flight [? s of] this kind were reported during May 19.

Czechoslovak General Staff believes movement of German troops in the direction of Czechoslovak frontier to be general.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on May 20.

<sup>2</sup> No. 238.

<sup>3</sup> On May 21, at noon, H.M. Consul-General at Vienna telegraphed: 'There are numerous unconfirmed rumours of movement of troops including some three battalions of German infantry and mechanized artillery towards Czechoslovak frontier yesterday evening. Further enquiries being made. Local press is using this morning most violent language towards Czechoslovak Government.'

No. 245

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 143 Telegraphic [C 4638/65/18]

PRAGUE, May 21,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 12.40 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>2</sup>

Following are views expressed by an informant at Czech General Staff.

(a) German troop movements towards Czech frontier are considered to be part of general plan of provocation and intimidation. Other instances have been flights of German aircraft over Czech territory and distribution of subversive pamphlets of German origin amongst Sudeten Germans which so informant maintained was known to have been organized not by Ministry of Propaganda but by German General Staff.

(b) He believes Herr Hitler has been persuaded by German General Staff to make show of force in attempting to bring Czechs to their knees; if they continue obdurate occupation of Sudeten districts is recommended. Hitler's displeasure with Henlein's conciliatory bearing in London has resulted in a peremptory summons to him for receipt of new orders and is regarded by

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on May 20.

<sup>2</sup> No. 244.

Czech General Staff as indications that arguments of German General Staff are being approved.

(c) There is feeling in Czech General Staff that Czechoslovakia cannot tolerate German provocation much longer and Chief of Staff himself is said to favour immediate mobilisation as a deterrent to the Germans. This view is being put before Czechoslovak Government and a decision may be taken to-night or tomorrow.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Belgrade.

#### No. 246

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 21, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 144 Telegraphic [C 4639/65/18]*

PRAGUE, May 21,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 12.40 a.m.

My telegram No. 137.<sup>2</sup>

I learn from a high official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Ministry has now been officially informed that reports of concentrations in Saxony are pure invention. This statement was made by German State Secretary Dr. Weizsäcker to Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin and also by German Legation at Prague to whom it was telephoned by an official, Dr. Altenburg, in German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin had then enquired in regard to other reports that there were concentrations in Silesia and North Austria. Dr. Weizsäcker had replied these were no doubt also inventions but that he must enquire before he could give an official answer.

3. In reply to a question from me as to view taken by Czechoslovak Government the official said that they wished of course to accept German assurance. If later any military precautions were contemplated by Czechoslovak Government I asked that I might be immediately informed.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on May 20.

<sup>2</sup> No. 238.

#### No. 247

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21, 1.0 p.m.)*

*No. 145 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4671/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 21, 1938

I have received an official message from Czechoslovak General Staff that early this morning the Czechoslovak Government decided in face of continual provocation to which they have been subjected since May 1 to put into force paragraph 22 of Defence Act which permits them to call up one class.

No information regarding this measure has appeared in the press which is



being heavily censored. The town however is full of rumours of mobilization and cars are certainly being requisitioned.

German Military Attaché visited the General Staff at 9 a.m. and protested in threatening language against what he described as mobilization orders.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

#### No. 248

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21, 2.45 p.m.)*

*No. 148 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4674/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 21, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs is very uneasy and I fear with good reason. He is satisfied that reports of German troop concentrations and movements towards the frontier are substantially accurate. They may of course only be intended to exercise pressure and influence the elections, but it is impossible to exclude the possibility of their being in preparation for an attack.

While he and Benes wish to be careful not to exaggerate the danger or give any avoidable provocation the Government feels bound to take certain precautionary measures. Under the constitution without consulting Parliament they could, I understand from His Excellency, call up five classes, but in view of assurances received from German Government that German action is in no way directed against Czechoslovakia it has been decided to call up only one class, a step which is necessary to reassure public opinion at home and to ensure the maintenance of authority of the state in the frontier areas.

(End of part 1.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For parts 2 and 3 of this telegram see Nos. 251 and 253.

#### No. 249

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 21, 3.0 p.m.)*

*No. 202 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4663/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 21, 1938

I called on Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning and found him in a highly excitable and pugnacious frame of mind.

He began by complaining that without previous agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I had informed Reuters last night of German denial as regards military concentrations and said that he would consequently be unable to give me any further information about military matters. I told His Excellency that while it was true that I had let Reuters know with a view to preventing the spread of exaggerated rumours I could only regard his present refusal as an indication that military measures were in fact being taken. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that refusal was one of principle. He added that

Czechs had now called up reserves, and when I expressed doubt rang up and obtained official confirmation. (I subsequently learnt from Czechoslovak Minister that it is true that a one year's class has been called up to cope with election situation. It was, he said, in no sense mobilisation but a necessity. I warned him that it was unfortunate since it would assuredly provoke counter measures.)

Herr von Ribbentrop then produced telegrams in regard to murder of two Sudeten farmers by a Czech major near Eger<sup>1</sup> and to numerous casualties amounting to nearly 100 which had occurred yesterday.

German nation could not tolerate prolongation of such a situation. He repeated warning he had given me as reported in my telegram No. 185.<sup>2</sup> Czechs he said were mad and if they persisted in their present attitude they would be destroyed. German Government appreciated the good intentions of His Majesty's Government but our efforts had led to no result whatever.

I protested vigorously against such a misrepresentation and took the opportunity to give him substance of your telegram No. 161<sup>3</sup> to me and 92<sup>4</sup> to Prague. I also protested against his denial of M. Benes's good faith and intentions and repeated all that the Czechoslovak Minister had told me after his recent return from Prague.

Herr von Ribbentrop listened but merely repeated that M. Benes could not be trusted and that Germany could not sit by and allow Germans to be murdered. I did not, he said, know . . .<sup>5</sup> if I thought otherwise. Germany would act.

I replied with all earnestness at my command on lines that while I recognised the intense gravity and danger of the situation it was essential to keep one's head and one's patience. If this great difficulty could be overcome we would find smoother waters ahead, whereas if it came to the worst no one could foretell how bad that worst would be.

Herr von Ribbentrop ended by stating he could tell me no more than he had already done. Germany would not wait much longer and if provocation continued her 75 millions would act as one man. I regard position as extremely critical. Czechs may believe, as Mr. Newton says in his telegram No. 135<sup>6</sup> that German . . .<sup>7</sup> Undoubtedly they do but in the last resort the force of Germany behind the Sudeten is more decisive than that of the Czechs over the Sudeten.

Repeated to Prague, Paris and Rome.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the Czech account of this incident, See Nos. 251 and 291.

<sup>2</sup> No. 206.

<sup>3</sup> No. 239.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 242, note 1.

<sup>5</sup> A word is missing here.

<sup>6</sup> No. 236.

<sup>7</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>8</sup> Sir N. Henderson was instructed at 6.10 p.m. to repeat this telegram, and subsequent telegrams on the subject, also to Budapest and Warsaw.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 169 Telegraphic [4776/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 21, 1938, 3.45 p.m.*

1. We have heard from His Majesty's Minister in Prague that it is stated in the press that the Political Committee of the Henlein Party has decided to inform the Czechoslovak Prime Minister that they are not in a position to hold conversations with the Czechoslovak Government so long as peace and order in the Sudeten country, and above all the constitutional rights of the German population, are not guaranteed.

2. All those who are anxious for a peaceful and orderly settlement of the Sudeten German question, and we assume the German Government desire this as much as we ourselves do, would desire that everything possible should be done to reduce the present state of tension. It was for this reason that I urged on the Czechoslovak Minister on May 20 (see my telegram to Prague No. 92<sup>1</sup>) that the issue of an invitation to Herr Henlein should be given early and wide publicity, and I am convinced that nothing would improve the atmosphere so much as an announcement that negotiations would be opened at a very early date. I therefore profoundly regret the decision which has apparently been reached by the Henlein Party.

3. I should be glad if you would speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in this sense and if you would urge that the German Government should use their influence with Herr Henlein in order to promote an early opening of the negotiations. The German Government have taken the view that this is a matter which must be settled between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein. The important thing, therefore, is to ensure that the two parties should enter into contact for that purpose with the least possible delay.

4. You should also say that while I appreciate the assurances reported in your telegrams Nos. 198<sup>2</sup> and 199<sup>3</sup> of May 20, I continue to receive persistent stories of troop movements in the direction of Czechoslovakia. I am well aware that the German Government have said that if there was bloodshed in Czechoslovakia affecting the Sudeten German population German intervention is inevitable, and that in German eyes a question of principle is involved, namely the inalienable right to protect people of German blood. This is naturally not a doctrine which His Majesty's Government can be expected to endorse though there would be little profit in entering into an argument about it with the German Government in the present circumstances. But His Majesty's Government feel bound to draw the attention of the German Government to their responsibilities in this matter.

5. His Majesty's Government, as the German Government well know, are doing their utmost to promote a peaceful solution of this question. They have been using all their influence with members of the Czechoslovak Government including the President himself in the direction of a just settlement. These

<sup>1</sup> See No. 242, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> No. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. See No. 240, note 4.

representations have been well received and the Czechoslovak Government have given us the firmest assurances that they are determined to do their utmost to this end. It is therefore imperative to give this opportunity of favourable development every chance of maturing, and in the interests of good relations between our two countries as on every other ground, I would most earnestly beg the German Government to exercise patience and all the influence they can in proper quarters.

6. You should add that if, in spite of His Majesty's Government's efforts, a conflict arises, the German Government must be well aware of the dangers which such a development would involve. France has obligations to Czechoslovakia and will be compelled to intervene in virtue of her obligations if there is a German aggression on Czechoslovakia. Indeed, French Ministers have repeatedly stated to His Majesty's Government that France would certainly so act. In such circumstances His Majesty's Government could not guarantee that they would not be forced by circumstances to become involved also. This point was quite clearly expressed by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on March 24, in the passage beginning with the words:

'Where peace and war are concerned, legal obligations are not alone involved', and ending with the words 'devoted to the same ideals of democratic liberty, and determined to uphold them'.

Repeated to Prague (No. 94), Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

#### No. 251

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 5.45 p.m.)

*No. 148 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4674/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 21, 1938

#### Part 2.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs went on to inform me of very unpleasant communication which had been made by German Minister for Foreign Affairs to Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin at 7 p.m. May 20. Herr von Ribbentrop had summoned the Czechoslovak Minister and spoken to him of disagreeable incidents and ill-treatment from which Sudeten Germans had lately been suffering. He had then drawn attention of the Czechoslovak Minister to words used by Herr Hitler in his speeches to the effect that he could not tolerate the infliction of injustice or oppression on people of German blood in neighbouring territories.

German Minister for Foreign Affairs had also complained that Czechoslovak Government had brought reports of German troop concentration to the notice of foreign Governments and had informed the Czechoslovak Minister that military movements were not being directed against Czechoslovakia but Herr von Ribbentrop had added that 'if such accusations continue to be made against us they may later in fact prove to be justified'.

<sup>1</sup> For part 1 of this telegram, see No. 248.

The interview had been very disagreeable. The Czechoslovak Minister had been as restrained in his attitude as possible but had not failed to point out that the notice of German military movements had already appeared in Leipzig 'Zeitung' on May 19 and had no doubt also reached foreign Governments from other sources.

Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs went on to tell me a very unfortunate incident had occurred this morning near frontier when two Sudeten Germans on motor bicycles had refused to obey an order given by a gendarme to stop and had both been shot dead by one unlucky shot. The gendarme was within his strict rights but he had failed to observe instructions which he had received to exercise great restraint. Although this was technically a purely internal matter Minister for Foreign Affairs had informed German Minister in Prague without delay and told him that those responsible would be disciplined. German Minister was already cognizant of the affair and his attitude had not been reassuring. German Minister had asked whether Minister for Foreign Affairs could assure him that military measures which Czechoslovak Government were taking were not directed against Germany. Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that his Government were not such fools as to threaten Germany and added that neither would Czechoslovak Government do anything which might bring about an attack by any other Powers on Germany.

(End of part 2).

#### No. 252

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 6.50 p.m.)

No. 204 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4664/1941/18]

BERLIN, May 21, 1938

My telegram No. 202.<sup>1</sup>

I urged Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning to restrain German press. He was not responsive even though he appeared to give some heed to arguments in that connexion. He countered, however, by asserting that since my conversation with him a week ago and his assurances of a desire for peaceful solution, British press had merely adopted a line of greater encouragement to Czechs than ever. Nor could I argue him out of this typical attitude.

Nevertheless I urgently recommend that such influence as can be exercised should be used to prevent British press from adopting over the week-end a too anti-German and pro-Czech attitude.<sup>2</sup> Last hope of peaceful solution depends in my opinion on wisdom of the Czechs in this grave crisis, and fact that Czechoslovak Government has called up reserves (even though only one class) which cannot but be regarded in interested quarters as a form of mobilization, is most unfortunate.

Repeated to Prague, Paris and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> No. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Halifax spoke in this sense to representatives of the press on May 22. See No. 305.



No. 253

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 148 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4674/1941/18]

PRAGUE, May 21, 1938

Part 3.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of further general discussion Minister for Foreign Affairs told me he was aware of mischievous reports such as those referred to in last paragraph of Berlin telegram 189<sup>2</sup> (I of course mentioned no names). President Benes and all other Czechoslovak leaders, including army, were absolutely opposed to war or adventure, realising the truth of what I had myself pointed out in the course of my recent *démarche*, namely that whatever the issue of a war Czechoslovakia would be exposed to the greatest suffering and indeed to enemy occupation. Even if anyone in Czechoslovakia had thoughts of a preventive war, the responsible leaders knew that the present time would be particularly unfavourable owing to inadequate fortifications on the Czech-Austrian frontier.

Minister for Foreign Affairs repeated that Government, and in particular President Benes, were most reluctant to take any further military steps but it might become necessary to call up further classes. The situation was very serious and they could not take responsibility of not being fully prepared. Moreover even if German measures were originally intended merely as a demonstration the temptation to the German Government to go further would be increased if it appeared that they would meet with no adequate resistance.

<sup>1</sup> For part 2 of this telegram, see No. 251.

<sup>2</sup> No. 212.

No. 254

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 8.25 p.m.)

No. 205 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4665/1941/18]

BERLIN, May 21, 1938

I read your telegram No. 169<sup>1</sup> to Minister for Foreign Affairs this evening. After listening carefully and taking notes His Excellency said that he could only ask why warning was addressed to Germany and not rather to Prague. The provocation in present case was 100 per cent. Czech, two harmless Germans who were taking part in no demonstration had been killed and sixty to eighty more were in hospital with severe wounds. In spite of all my pressure he declined to undertake to give advice of any kind to Henlein and repeated several times that German attitude depended on developments at

<sup>1</sup> No. 250.

Prague and that if His Majesty's Government desired peaceful solution it was to Prague British recommendations should be addressed.

His Excellency was clearly perturbed by reference to Prime Minister's speech of March 24, but declared if worst came to the worst Germany would fight again as she did in 1914. He protested, however, that war, if it came, would be one of aggression provoked by France who could not bear to see Germany strong again after her last defeat. Though, as you will probably realise, it was not easy to reason with Herr von Ribbentrop in a state of considerable excitement, I impressed upon him very strongly necessity for patience and coolness in a situation which called for both in the highest degree.

Nevertheless though of course I did not admit this in my conversation if situation is to be saved it is at Prague that action must be taken. If there are more incidents and bloodshed nothing I can say here will stop German Government from intervening.

Repeated to Paris, Prague, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

#### No. 255

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 21, 9.15 p.m.)

No. 206 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4666/1941/18]

BERLIN, May 21, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Before seeing Minister for Foreign Affairs I called on State Secretary who is of calmer calibre than Herr von Ribbentrop and also read to him your telegram No. 169.<sup>2</sup>

State Secretary again described stories of German troop movements as completely unfounded. Nor has my Military Attaché been able to discover any authentic information to confirm them (I do not in fact believe that they were true yesterday but it is highly probable that they are today as result of Czechoslovak Government having called up reservists).

State Secretary took the line that these rumours had originated from Czech sources not only to prepare an appearance of German aggression but also to excuse their own military preparations. He quoted apart from calling up garrison reservists numerous instances of this such as despatch of troops to frontier, reinforcement of frontier guards and closing of various roads etc. (see Budapest telegram No. 66).<sup>3</sup>

State Secretary repeated his observations of yesterday in regard to Czech extremists who were determined to force an issue now rather than later and took the same line as Herr von Ribbentrop did to me later to the effect that if tension was not to develop pressure should be brought to bear on them rather than on German Government.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 254.

<sup>2</sup> No. 250.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21, 9.30 p.m.)*

*No. 145 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4692/1941/18]*

PARIS, May 21, 1938

Minister for Foreign Affairs summoned me to say he has heard Czechs have mobilised two classes without consulting French beforehand. He is therefore going to warn Czechoslovak Minister in Paris what serious consequences this may have and how unfortunate such hasty action is. Minister for Foreign Affairs will tell M. Osusky that Czechs must on no account proceed to any further mobilisation without consulting France and Great Britain. His Excellency assured me that French Government would apply all possible pressure upon Prague to reach a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten question.

I replied that he could be certain that His Majesty's Government would continue to act in this sense as they had done all along. Speaking personally I felt Czechoslovak Government had put themselves in the wrong both over two Germans who were killed by Czech frontier guards this morning and over mobilisation of two classes without . . .<sup>1</sup> French Government. I therefore hoped that he would speak most severely to M. Osusky and would even warn latter that Czechoslovak Government had in effect broken their treaty with the French by thus mobilising two classes. I urged this measure should be cancelled at once.

Whilst I was with M. Bonnet he heard on telephone from M. Cambon<sup>1</sup> that instructions were being sent to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin to warn German Government of extreme danger of using force which would probably compel France to come to the help of Czechoslovakia and mean that Great Britain would stand by France.

M. Bonnet said that French Ambassador in Berlin was most pessimistic and reported very dangerous atmosphere in Berlin.

Repeated to ?Berlin, Prague, and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> M. Roger Cambon, Counsellor at the French Embassy in London.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21, 10.10 p.m.)*

*No. 146 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4693/1941/18]*

PARIS, May 21, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

2. Minister for Foreign Affairs had just asked me to urge you to instruct British Ambassador at Berlin to make second part of communication agreed upon at London meeting of Ministers viz. the 'warning', when M. Cambon telephoned to him to say this had been done. His Excellency expressed warm satisfaction. In order that there may be no mistake . . .<sup>2</sup> is going to read to

<sup>1</sup> No. 256.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

M. Léger or M. Massigli text of your telegram No. 169 to Berlin,<sup>3</sup> which has since been decyphered.

3. M. Bonnet spontaneously remarked that Czechoslovakian action in mobilising two classes might well cause Germans to maintain that Czechs had violated terms of their arbitration treaty with Germany.

4. The impression I derived from our conversation is that M. Bonnet is only too anxious to follow any lead we may give at Prague with a view to averting war. If actual German aggression takes place however it seems certain that France will go to Czechoslovakia's help and I hear that M. Bonnet so informed the press just before I saw him. He will I believe only be reported as 'an authorised spokesman'.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Rome.

<sup>3</sup> No. 250.

### No. 258

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 22, 10.0 a.m.)*

*No. 151 Telegraphic [C 4677/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 21, 1938, 10.25 p.m.<sup>1</sup>

German Minister who is evidently very anxious to state the German side of developments has sent a Secretary to His Majesty's Legation to give me the following verbal informal communication:—

Yesterday Czechoslovak Government were alarmed by the reports that German troops were concentrating on Saxon frontier. Later it became clear from German official statement that the news was baseless.

German Minister for Foreign Affairs invited Czechoslovak Minister at Berlin to visit him yesterday evening and confirmed the above.

His Excellency continued that by spreading this baseless and senseless news Czechoslovak Government would contribute to creating the very situation that they wished to avoid. He went on to draw Czechoslovak Minister's attention to incidents in Sudeten area and reminded him of the Chancellor's words that he could not look on quietly at maltreatment of Germans outside the Reich.

Communication then referred to more serious incidents which had recently taken place of majority of which it was said that Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs had this morning professed ignorance. At Eger two Sudeten Germans had been shot dead yesterday by Czechoslovak troops in charge of a major. This had been confirmed by the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs to German Minister who had asked for a military enquiry and immediate arrest of officers.

The Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs had informed the German Minister this morning that one class of reservists and five classes of technical

<sup>1</sup> The date of despatch of this telegram is as stated above, but the telegram also bears, apparently in error, the date of May 20.

troops had been mobilised and that troops had been sent into frontier districts to support authority of the state.

Secretary of Legation went on to say that Dr. Hodza had summoned Herr Frank, the Sudeten German leader, this morning and invited him to go to the furthest limits in collaboration for the preservation of peace. According to Herr Frank, Dr. Hodza had been greatly shaken and said that he would visit M. Benes in the afternoon in a final effort to keep the peace. If he failed he (Hodza) would retire. Herr Frank had the impression that Hodza was no longer the master of the situation which had passed into the hands of the army.

Finally the Sudeten Germans considered despatch of troops into their areas to be a provocation. The Secretary professed ignorance of arrangements alleged to have been made by Henlein party that they would refuse to discuss nationalities statute with Government till order was restored. He was inclined to doubt its truth and promised to bring matter to the notice of German Minister who was seeing Herr Frank again this afternoon.

Repeated [to] Berlin.

No. 259

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 22, 1.5 a.m.)*

*No. 155 Telegraphic [C 4680/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 21, 1938, 11.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 148.<sup>1</sup>

During our conversation this morning Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs also referred to military movements in Hungary and Poland. He said that he could not altogether disregard them although he was at present [? not] inclined to regard them as a threat. There had been for a little while past a certain concentration on Polish-Czechoslovak frontier but he was prepared to believe that this might be either for internal reasons or a purely precautionary measure without any hostile intent.

In Hungary he had heard that five annual classes had been called to the colours some days ago. From my French colleague who was waiting to see Minister for Foreign Affairs I subsequently ascertained that, according to information supplied by the French Military Adviser to Czechoslovak army, General Faucher, the Czechoslovak military staff is not anxious about developments in Poland or Hungary nor is it the case that five classes have been called up in Hungary but only certain reservists taken from the five different classes.

My French colleague had learned from the same source that in addition to the class called up by Czechoslovak Government, reservists had been called up from other classes for following purposes: to guard all frontiers of Czechoslovakia except that of Roumania, to bring the numbers employed in aviation and anti-aircraft defences up to war strength, to strengthen garrisons of

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 248, 251, and 253.



fortifications, to guard railways, and to keep watch. General Faucher confirmed the view that German measures were probably intended as a means of pressure but that the possibility of their being a prelude to an attack could not be excluded.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Budapest and Rome.

No. 260

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 1060 [C 4631/42/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 21, 1938*

Sir,

In the course of conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 19th May the French Ambassador referred to the passage in my speech in the House of Lords on the previous night in which he<sup>1</sup> spoke of the possibility of an understanding with Germany. M. Corbin asked whether this portended any fresh move in the direction of negotiation with Berlin.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan told M. Corbin that my remark must be taken in a general sense. The French Government were fully aware of the approach which had been made to Germany early in March at what had proved to be an unfavourable moment, and as the French Government knew, there had been no development of the conversations then initiated. His Majesty's Government had, he thought, no immediate intention of reopening them, though their attitude remained the same in that they still hoped for better relations and a better understanding with Germany and would probably take any opportunity that presented itself for making a further attempt to realise that aim. My statement must not, however, be taken to mean that His Majesty's Government had decided on any definite approach to Berlin in the near future. As the French Government knew, His Majesty's Government were in contact with the German Government on the subject of Czechoslovakia, and if a peaceful and satisfactory settlement of that question could be achieved, and if we could contribute anything towards it, it might be that the situation would be considered favourable for the further discussion of other matters.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> This word should read 'I'. The passage in Lord Halifax's speech appears to be 'We should for example like to see removed all causes of mistrust and suspicion that may be held to stand in the way of complete understanding between ourselves and Germany'. (Parl. Debates, H. of L., 5th Series, Vol. 109, cols. 209-10.)

No. 261

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 22, 12.5 a.m.)

No. 147 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4694/1941/18]

PARIS, May 22,<sup>1</sup> 1938

My immediately preceding telegram<sup>2</sup> last paragraph.

I learn that at a press conference this evening Minister for Foreign Affairs re-affirmed that France would observe her treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia in the event of a German aggression. 'France', M. Bonnet said, 'sincerely hopes that the minority problem can be settled amicably. France has urged the utmost prudence, and has urged Czechoslovakia to give the greatest satisfaction possible to the Sudeten Germans within the framework of the Czechoslovak State. But if Germany crosses the Czech frontier that will automatically start war, much as France hopes that Germany will do nothing to put France in the position where her treaty obligations would oblige her to intervene. France will respect her treaty undertakings and provide the utmost help to Czechoslovakia if she is the victim of aggression.'

Repeated to Berlin, Prague and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted before midnight on May 21-2.

<sup>2</sup> No. 257.

No. 262

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

No. 96 Telegraphic [C 4776/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938, 12.20 a.m.

1. You will have seen from my telegram to Berlin No. 169<sup>1</sup> the effort His Majesty's Government are making to induce calm and moderation in Berlin.

2. I have noticed with appreciation that Minister for Foreign Affairs wisely informed German Minister frankly of the unfortunate incident of killing of two Sudeten Germans. I am sure that Czechoslovak Government will continue to take every possible precaution to prevent or minimise incidents and I am informing German Government that I am confident of this. In these circumstances Czechoslovak Government will realise supreme importance of making every effort to prove their desire to keep the way open for peaceful solution.

3. Please represent this immediately in the proper quarter.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 250.

No. 263

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 173 Telegraphic [C 4776/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938, 12.45 a.m.

My telegram to Prague No. 96.<sup>1</sup>

Please inform German Government of advice we have given at Prague and impress upon them that we are going to the utmost limits in our endeavour to keep the way open for peaceful solution.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 262.

No. 264

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 174 Telegraphic [C 4775/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938, 12.45 a.m.

Please convey following with all earnestness you can command as personal message from myself to Herr von Ribbentrop.

2. His Majesty's Government are exerting all possible influence at Prague for avoidance of further incidents and will continue to do so, and I earnestly hope Herr von Ribbentrop will do anything he can on his side to secure patience at this critical time. If resort is had to forcible measures, it is quite impossible for me or for him to foretell results that may follow, and I would beg him not to count upon this country being able to stand aside if from any precipitate action there should start European conflagration. Only those will benefit from such a catastrophe who wish to see destruction of European civilisation.

3. In any case prospects of understanding and co-operation between our two countries would be gravely jeopardised by any action that would appear to English opinion as wantonly destroying chances of peaceful settlement.

4. I fully approve way in which you have made official representations but it may perhaps help if you give this personal message on my behalf.

Repeated to Paris, Prague, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These Missions were informed at 1.15 p.m. on May 22 that the telegram was repeated to them for their information only.

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
 (Received May 22, 10.0 a.m.)  
 No. 470 Telegraphic [C 4690/1941/18]

ROME, May 22,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 1.0 a.m.

Your telegram No. 314.<sup>2</sup>

I went to see the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs this evening and made a communication to him in accordance with your instructions. I then asked him what his view was of the present situation as regards Czechoslovakia. He replied that the news today was certainly uncomfortable and indeed somewhat critical. Movements of troops were taking place on both sides. Two classes had been called up in Czechoslovakia and two Sudeten Germans had been shot dead. There had also been other clashes in which people had been wounded. There had been run on banks at Bratislava. Nevertheless he remained fairly optimistic. When Germans were here they did not give him the impression that they intended any early or violent action as regards Czechoslovakia. They had always told the Italian Government that they intended to have an early settlement of Austrian question but he gathered that they did not regard Czechoslovakia as a pressing matter. This morning Italian Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin had said that feeling was running high. Newspapers were violent. But he had reported this afternoon that the atmosphere had improved and was quieter particularly in high circles. I found the Minister for Foreign Affairs knew of reply General Keitel had given to our request for information about alleged troop movements. Count Ciano then asked me whether I had any news and how I regarded the situation. I replied that I had heard of troop movements and this naturally was alarming. Personally I had never felt Spanish civil war was likely to lead to serious European complications but today for the first time I was really troubled. It was not Czechoslovak problem as such that was the danger point but the fact that a solution of the Sudeten question by any but peaceful means might bring about a European conflagration. France had announced publicly that she would stand by her treaty obligations.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me whether I believed that France would mobilise if there were concentration of German troops on the Czech frontier without any movement across it. I said I could not reply but obviously France was likely to take precautions of a similar character.

Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs observed that I knew no doubt Italian attitude about Czechoslovakia. They were entirely neutral. I said that I hoped at any rate he would exercise such a moderating influence as he could. I rather fear Italian Government may be inclined to consider the question as one entirely within German competence, since he stated we could now only await developments.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted before midnight on May 21-2.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 239, note 4.

He repeated however, as I left, that on the whole he was still inclined to be optimistic.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Prague.

No. 266

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 22, 1:15 a.m.)

No. 148 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4695/1941/18]

PARIS, May 22, 1938<sup>1</sup>

Your telegram No. 136<sup>2</sup> and my telegrams Nos. 145 and 146.<sup>3</sup>

As I feared from what Minister for Foreign Affairs had told me that M. Cambon might have given wrong impression that warning Sir N. Henderson had been instructed to give to German Government went further than in fact it did, I instructed His Majesty's Minister to read your telegram No. 169<sup>4</sup> to Berlin to Political Director, in strictest confidence, which he undertook to respect. M. Massigli took careful note and promised to inform Minister for Foreign Affairs at once.

2. M. Massigli stated Minister for Foreign Affairs had spoken to Czechoslovak Minister in the sense foreshadowed in my telegram 145 and had informed him of the anxiety I had expressed. French Minister in Prague had been instructed to hold similar language to Czechoslovak Government.

3. Further, French Minister had been instructed to press Czechoslovak Government in case of any serious incident or any provocative German action to remind German Government that conciliatory procedure was provided by treaty and that Czechoslovak Government was ready to follow it.

4. French Minister at Prague has reported calling up of classes had on the whole had a good effect in calming Czech feeling and reminding Sudeten Germans that in the event of a conflict they, placed as they were on frontier, would be first to feel consequences. Sudeten had been duly answering call to colours and had been making no difficulties about doing so.

5. German radio this evening had given impression that sentiment in Germany was calmer.

Repeated Berlin, Prague and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted before midnight on May 21-2.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram instructed Sir E. Phipps to inform M. Bonnet of the general sense of the instructions to Sir N. Henderson in No. 250.

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 256 and 257.

<sup>4</sup> No. 250.

No. 267

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 12.0 noon)*  
No. 213 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4715/1941/18]

BERLIN, May 22, 1938

The tone of the press is much more moderate this morning. Newspapers publish a Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau message from London to the effect



that both the British and the French Governments are doing their best in Prague to bring about a peaceful solution.

Emphasis is laid on the success of Henlein at the municipal elections and the world is urged to draw the obvious conclusion namely that autonomy for the Sudetens is the minimum concession which must be made to preserve peace. In a leading article the 'Völkischer Beobachter' speaks in this strain and adds that after the incident[?] of the last few days Czech promises must be followed by deeds. Partial solution cannot restore order. The responsibility for the present situation clearly rests on Prague and the Czechoslovak Government must see to it that they do not now aggravate their own guilt.

'The situation is too serious and the guilt question too clear. A wrong cannot be righted by further wrongs. The will of a people to enjoy freedom and equality cannot be broken by police terror: a fact which should be taken into account also in London where the authorities have to struggle with these national movements for example in Palestine and in India.'

### No. 268

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 1.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 207 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4667/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 22, 1938

### PART I

I had another long talk with State Secretary last night. While he seemed to be a little less anxious he said his most disquieting news was that Czech military party seemed to have the upper hand at Prague.

I have been anxious about this ever since reading Prague telegram No. 143,<sup>1</sup> paragraph (b) of which (and even my French colleague entirely agrees) is complete nonsense. If there is a war party here it is not German military but party of extremists.

Moreover war here, however propagandized, would be extremely unpopular generally.

Difficult though it is to be sure which of the two parties is lying in this case neither I nor my military advisers have any tangible grounds for disbelieving German denials of troop concentrations at any rate before yesterday, i.e. after Czech military measures had already been taken. This, subject to fresh information to the contrary, in itself lends colour to German view that rumours were spread originally by Czechs to give justification to their own preparations. When I told Herr von Weizsäcker last night that my two Military Attachés were motoring today towards Czechoslovakian frontier to see for themselves he was without doubt genuinely pleased that they should judge for themselves.

It would be a grievous mistake to assume that Germany is always in every specific instance in the wrong. While I have reported to you unequivocally what I believe to be Germany's ultimate aims as regards Sudeten, I am con-

<sup>1</sup> No. 245.

vinced that Herr Hitler desires today the peaceful solution which in fact constitutes the first step towards exercise of self-determination. I can quite understand that Czechoslovak Government, realizing that what we are asking them to do constitutes in fact such a first stage, may prefer a crisis now rather than later. But it is equally clear that it is not in German interests today to provoke a conflict consequences of which are unforeseeable.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

## No. 269

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 1.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 207 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4667/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 22, 1938

### PART 2

Following is continuation of my telegram No. 207.<sup>1</sup>

Every German paper this morning has head lines to the effect that England refuses to see realities. That is in fact the German view whether it be expressed volubly and excitably by Herr von Ribbentrop or calmly and reasonably by State Secretary and others. Prime Minister's statement<sup>2</sup> in the House of Commons is given full prominence in the press today but it has already been largely discounted here and German attitude has become fatalistic: i.e. if they are obliged to, they must, at whatever cost, march into Czechoslovakia to save fellow-Germans from ill-treatment and massacre.

I am doing the utmost that I can here but if my representations are to carry weight I would earnestly beg that prominence be given in the British press to such strong advice as His Majesty's Government may think fit to give at Prague. Key to peaceful solution lies there and not at Berlin.

I told the State Secretary last night that I would have recommended His Majesty's Government to urge Czechoslovak Government not to wait a moment longer before taking contact with Henlein if it had not been for party refusal to talk with Czechoslovak Government before guarantees were given. I impressed upon him the necessity for such contact as . . .<sup>3</sup> of curbing conduct . . .<sup>3</sup> and deplored attitude of standoffishness adopted by Herr von Ribbentrop. State Secretary himself was objective and sympathetic but argued that it was acts and not words which were needed. He referred to M. Benes's speech yesterday promising cultural and other rights to Sudeten but pointed out that he had omitted the most important point of all, namely, administrative autonomy. I expatiated at length on M. Benes's difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> No. 268.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the statement of March 24. The Prime Minister had made no recent statement on foreign affairs in the House of Commons. Lord Halifax had spoken on Anglo-Italian relations and the League in the House of Lords on May 18, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the same topics in the House of Commons on May 20. Neither speech had referred to German or Czechoslovak questions.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

State Secretary, while admitting them and unable to explain what M. Benes actually should do, could only repeat that he must do something.

I fear that that is in fact the exact position.

No. 270

*Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 22, 4.40 p.m.)*

*No. 104 Telegraphic [C 4706/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, May 22, 1938, 4.10 p.m.

I feel bound in the present circumstances to record once again the opinion, expressed in Lord Chilston's despatch No. 196,<sup>1</sup> that it is unlikely that Soviet Union will go to war in defence of Czechoslovakia, except possibly in the event of a general European conflagration, and I consider, even in the latter event, possibility of Soviet Union standing aloof cannot be excluded.

The Soviet official press, in commenting on situation in Central Europe, has consistently avoided suggesting that Red Army would march in the event of a German invasion of Czechoslovakia. In particular no reference has been made to assurances which, according to the Czech press, were given by M. Kalinin to Czech delegation at May 1 celebrations (see Prague telegram No. 126 Saving).<sup>2</sup> Indeed there has been no concrete indication either way of what Soviet attitude would be save vigorous *démenti* reported in my telegram No. 23 Saving.<sup>3</sup> Finally I consider it highly significant that the anniversary on May 16 of Soviet-Czech Mutual Assistance Pact, which in previous years has been made the subject of more or less enthusiastic articles, has this year been passed over in complete silence.

I gather German Embassy have given Berlin to understand there is no danger of Soviet Government going to war in defence of Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 148.

<sup>2</sup> No. 210.

<sup>3</sup> No. 202.

No. 271

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 141 Telegraphic [C 4695/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938, 4.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 148.<sup>1</sup>

1. It is of utmost importance that French Government should not be under any illusion as to attitude of His Majesty's Government, so far as it can be forecast at the moment, in the event of failure to bring about peaceful settlement in Czechoslovak question.

2. His Majesty's Government have given the most serious warnings to Berlin, and these should have prospects of success in deterring German Government from any extreme courses. But it might be highly dangerous

<sup>1</sup> No. 266.

if the French Government were to read more into those warnings than is justified by their terms.

3. His Majesty's Government would of course always honour their pledge to come to the assistance of France if she were the victim of unprovoked aggression by Germany. In that event they would be bound to employ all the forces at their command.

4. If, however, the French Government were to assume that His Majesty's Government would at once take joint military action with them to preserve Czechoslovakia against German aggression, it is only fair to warn them that our statements do not warrant any such assumption.

5. In the view of His Majesty's Government the military situation is such that France and England, even with such assistance as might be expected from Russia, would not be in a position to prevent Germany over-running Czechoslovakia. The only result would be a European war, the outcome of which, so far as can be foreseen at this moment, would be at least doubtful.

6. His Majesty's Government fully realise the nature and extent of French obligations but they feel that in the present highly critical situation the French Government should take full account of the preceding considerations. His Majesty's Government would therefore hope that they might be given an opportunity of expressing their views before any action is taken by the French Government which might render the position more acute or have the result of exposing them to German attack.

7. Please speak in above sense to French Minister for Foreign Affairs, adding that of course nothing will be said in Berlin to detract from the warning already given, and that His Majesty's Government will continue to make every effort to restrain German Government and to secure peaceful settlement.

#### No. 272

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 4.35 p.m.)*

*No. 162 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4667/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 22, 1938

This morning's papers published the following official communiqué.

'The Minister of Defence has, with the agreement of the Government, and on the basis of the Defence Act, called up for special training one annual class of the reserves and supplementary reserves (Ersatz reserve), completed by members of technical arms. The reason for this measure is the necessity to train the reservists in the use of the recently introduced weapons (as is done in other States). Regard was at the same time had to the needs to increase the inadequate establishment, and, in a time of disturbance, to maintain the calm, order and security of the State, as well as to prevent incidents such as had occurred in certain places in the Republic.'

The Government Press Bureau adds the following commentary:—

'As appears from the text of the statement, the question is one of a measure by the Ministry of National Defence which was taken for the reason given in

the statement. There is therefore no question of mobilisation, for which a mere measure by the Minister for National Defence would not be sufficient; for that a resolution by the competent constitutional organs would be required. The Minister for National Defence has taken this measure on the basis of Section 22 of the Defence Law.' That section reads:—

'If a new weapon is introduced the members of the first reserve can, if necessary, be called up as an exceptional measure for a special training not exceeding four weeks, which are to be reckoned as part of their total training.'

Repeated to Berlin.

Foreign Office to repeat to Paris.

### No. 273

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 5.30 p.m.)*

*No. 209 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4668/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 22, 1938

In the absence of Herr von Ribbentrop (who is possibly at Berchtesgaden) I conveyed your personal message to him in a private letter which I asked State Secretary to have delivered without delay.

Herr von Weizsäcker's only comment on message which I authorized him to read was that it contained nothing which I had not already said to Herr von Ribbentrop. I pointed out difference was that it constituted an earnest personal message from yourself conceived in friendliest but also most serious spirit and I begged him to ask Herr von Ribbentrop to read it in that spirit.

I laid stress on aspect that precipitate action would only benefit enemies not only of Government of Germany but of all those who desired to save Europe from disaster. We must not sit by fatalistically but must show ourselves stronger than fate and wiser than in 1914. If, I said, the German Government really believe (as they do) that M. Benes's real aim is to force an issue now it was all the more important that Germany should not fall into the trap.

I laid the utmost emphasis on efforts which not only we but also the French were making to keep the way open for a peaceful solution and informed State Secretary of your instructions to His Majesty's Minister at Prague and in fact used every argument at my disposal on this and other lines.

I found Herr von Weizsäcker receptive and helpful, at the moment ready to believe in British but still doubtful as to French good will, but he said German information was to the effect that M. Benes was acting or rather refusing to act in full conformity with Paris. I replied that this did not correspond entirely with my information since speaking confidentially I could tell him that the French Government had taken grave exception to the calling up of Czech reserves. (I mentioned this point to the French Ambassador whom I have kept informed together with my United States colleague and South African Minister). I did in fact the best I could to convince him of French good faith as well as of our own.

Repeated to Prague, Rome, Paris, Warsaw and Budapest.



No. 274

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 6.0 p.m.)  
No. 210 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4669/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 22, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of my conversation with State Secretary he gave me to read two telegrams from German Minister and Military Attaché at Prague which had been received this morning.

Following is gist of information therein.

Frank and Neuwirth, two of Henlein party, had a second conversation yesterday with Hodza and Minister of the Interior. Conversation had been approved by M. Benes by telephone. Hodza had notified Henlein leaders that exceptional state of affairs (i.e. military instead of civil control) would be decreed in certain German towns such as Brunn. Henlein leaders had protested against this measure and had said that they would refuse to resume conversations until after restoration of constitutional position.

Minister of the Interior had apparently admitted that the military had got the upper hand at Prague, that various military measures, stopping of telephone communication and roads, &c. were being taken and more than one class called to the colours without the consent of the Government and that Council of Ministers had requested M. Benes to return to Prague to take decision as between Government and General Staff.

Czech Chief of Staff had informed German Military Attaché that Czechoslovak Government had irrefutable proof that eight to ten German divisions were on the march across Saxony towards Czechoslovak frontier.

(Whatever may happen in the next few days this is palpably untrue since I doubt if even one division with its vast amount of motor transport could so move without our knowledge here.)

According to German Military Attaché Czech General Staff is determined to insure order in Sudeten areas by military force.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 273.

No. 275

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax  
No. 211 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4670/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 22, 1938, 6.0 p.m.

Might it not be useful if French Government were to instruct their Ambassador here to remind German Government of arbitration treaty, to notify them of Czech readiness to abide by it and to express hope that Germany will do so likewise in the event of serious incident arising?

I believe Herr Hitler is holding meeting of leaders and Generals at Berchtes-

gaden today and presume line which Germany intends to follow will be decided there.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

**No. 276**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22, 6.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 164 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4761/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 22, 1938

Your telegram No. 96.<sup>1</sup>

I spoke immediately in the sense of your instructions first to President of the Council and then to Minister for Foreign Affairs.

They have both given me most sincere and emphatic assurances that everything possible will be done to avoid or minimize the incidents and to prove desire of the Czechoslovak Government to reach a peaceful solution. There is nothing in the least chauvinistic or desperate in their attitude and I certainly think it can, as they both pointed out, be taken as self-evident and undoubted that these assurances are absolutely true and heartfelt. They asked me to thank you for action which you have taken in Berlin.

Repeated to Rome, Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 262.

**No. 277**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 105 Telegraphic [C 4777/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938, 10.15 p.m.

1. From more than one quarter I hear that Czechoslovak military are taking control and that the Government are losing their authority. I should be glad to have your appreciation of truth of this story and to know whether you have any suggestion for strengthening hand of the Government.

2. I am rather disturbed at reports of communist attacks on Sudeten Germans (your telegram No. 136).<sup>1</sup> We may be at the mercy of incidents and I earnestly trust Czechoslovak Government are impressed with necessity of doing everything to prevent them.

3. They are, I hope, equally determined to make rapid progress with negotiations and to make the most generous offer possible. German State Secretary (see Berlin telegram No. 207)<sup>2</sup> has complained that M. Benes in his speech made no mention of administrative autonomy. I trust this does not mean that M. Benes is not disposed to make proposals with that object, for it seems to us both essential and urgent that President should as early as possible make some generous pronouncement of determination to proceed on large lines.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of May 20 quoted reports in the press of disturbances during election meetings.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 268 and 269.

4. Please take early opportunity of bringing points in paragraphs 2 and 3 above to notice of Czechoslovak Government.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Warsaw, Rome and Budapest.

No. 278

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 23, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 38 Telegraphic [C 4717/1941/18]*

WARSAW, May 22, 1938, 10.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 39 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs today what were the reasons for *démarche* which he was reported to have made in Prague yesterday regarding Czechoslovakian frontier. M. Beck informed me that yesterday telephone communications with Teschen area were interrupted and he had received information that Czechoslovakian troops with machine guns had appeared in fair numbers on Polish frontier. Under the circumstances he had instructed his Minister at Prague merely to enquire what were the reasons for these measures. He had not threatened any counter-measures and did not intend to do so if he received reassuring reply from Prague. Incidentally he could assure me that no movements of troops had taken place on this side of the frontier and [?he] had caused *démenti* to be issued in London to this effect. His information from Berlin and Prague was more reassuring to-day and he had no alarming reports regarding troop movements from Germany nor of any undue activity on Russian side of the frontier. His Excellency who leaves for Stockholm to-morrow morning informed me that he had thought of postponing his journey but in view of the more reassuring news to-day and the fact that any such postponement might make bad impression he had decided not to alter his plan.

I took the opportunity of again impressing on His Excellency the necessity of doing everything possible to secure peaceful solution of the present crisis and received vague but satisfactory assurances in reply.

Repeated to Prague, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 230.

No. 279

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 143 Telegraphic [C 4692/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938, 11.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 145.<sup>1</sup>

1. We much appreciate wisdom of advice given by French Minister for Foreign Affairs to Czechoslovak Government to abstain from further military preparations, and we very much hope Czechoslovak Government may be

<sup>1</sup> No. 256.

guided by this advice. If so, we think it would be helpful to inform German Government and we should be glad to do so.

2. It would of course be all the more effective if French Government felt able to advise Czechoslovak Government to countermand any of the measures already taken.

3. Please so inform Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Repeated to Prague,<sup>2</sup> Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton was informed at 11 p.m. on May 22 that this telegram was repeated to him for information only.

#### No. 280

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 178 Telegraphic [C 4667/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 22, 1938, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 207.<sup>1</sup>

1. I am glad you have despatched Military Attachés towards the frontier.

2. You will of course let me have their report with least possible delay. For your information, I would publish here if favourable.

3. It would be very useful if we could get clear picture of sequence of events, e.g. relation of time between Czech and German troop movements.

4. Perhaps your Military Attaché could continue to compare notes with Military Attaché in Prague. I am telegraphing on this point to His Majesty's Minister in Prague.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Paris, Prague, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 268 and 269.

<sup>2</sup> Instructions to this effect were sent to Mr. Newton at 11 p.m. on May 22.

#### No. 281

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 180 Telegraphic [C 4774/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 22, 1938, 11.30 p.m.*

1. If the German Government think it would be useful, I would be prepared to ask Czechoslovak Government to allow His Majesty's Minister in Prague to send an observer to the Sudeten districts to report direct on actual situation to His Majesty's Government.

2. I recognise of course that it would be impossible to make complete survey in reasonable time, but such action might be expected to exert steadying influence.

3. Please at once ask Minister for Foreign Affairs whether he would like us to do this.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*  
 (Received May 23, 9.30 a.m.)  
 No. 471 Telegraphic [C 4720/1941/18]

ROME, May 22, 11.35 p.m.

In view of seriousness of the situation as disclosed by most recent telegrams from Berlin, Prague and Paris I thought it well to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs this evening. I gave him to read substance of Foreign Office telegram No. 96 to Prague.<sup>1</sup> When Minister for Foreign Affairs came to the passage about troop movements in the direction of Czechoslovakia he observed that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires had been informed that these movements were small in character and mainly for drilling purposes. When he reached the reference to Prime Minister's speech he enquired whether this point had been made to the German Government and I replied that it had and that Sir N. Henderson had read the whole of this communication to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs. I added that the policy of His Majesty's Government was neither more nor less than that expressed in speech to which a reference was made. I remarked that His Majesty's Government took a very grave view of the crisis. They felt that a European conflagration would only help those who wished to see European civilisation destroyed.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he had no further news from the Italian Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin. He hoped therefore that nothing very disturbing had happened to-day. I observed that at an interview between His Majesty's Ambassador and Herr von Ribbentrop the former had found Minister for Foreign Affairs in a somewhat excitable condition. Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs said that though recognizing the gravity of the position he personally thought that unless some serious and unforeseen incident took place a peaceful solution would be reached. He stated that Signor Mussolini also regarded the position with calm.

I left under distinct impression that neither Minister for Foreign Affairs nor Mussolini are [? is] seriously alarmed though Count Ciano had added at one point that much would depend on whether elections took place quietly.

Although Minister for Foreign Affairs did not make any definite promise he hinted for the first time that . . .<sup>2</sup> might possibly be able to do something to help. He said incidentally that he had heard that feeling was running high in Budapest but that he did not think that anything would actually be done by Hungary to aggravate the situation.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Paris, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> This reference was an error for telegram 169 to Berlin (i.e. No. 250 above).

<sup>2</sup> The text should probably read 'Italian Government'.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received May 23, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 170 Telegraphic [C 4718/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 22, 1938, 11.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 164.<sup>1</sup>

I took opportunity of these interviews to inform President of Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs unofficially of what was being said by His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin in the sense of the first three paragraphs only of your telegram No. 169 to Berlin.<sup>2</sup>

I told them also that His Majesty's Ambassador had found German Minister for Foreign Affairs in a highly excitable and pugnacious frame of mind on Saturday morning and had been told by Herr von Ribbentrop that Germany would not wait much longer and that if provoked continuously her 75,000,000 would act as one man. The Minister for Foreign Affairs observed that a warning in almost precisely the same terms had been given to Czechoslovak Minister at Berlin. I furthermore told both President of Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sir N. Henderson's personal view that situation was extremely critical and of his belief that if there were any more incidents and bloodshed nothing would stop the German Government from intervening.

Immediately on the receipt of Sir N. Henderson's repetition to me of his telegram No. 198<sup>3</sup> I had already informed a high official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday evening of the views expressed in the last sentence.

From both President of Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs I learnt that with one exception which was moreover not very serious (on this I am reporting separately) no incidents of any importance had been reported up to date. The military measures taken, according to their accounts from all sources, had produced a good deal of effect in Sudeten areas. The authority of the State had been enhanced. The radical elements had been unpleasantly surprised by the Government's measures as had been confirmed to the Government officials in confidence by moderate elements to whom this assertion of State authority was welcome. The smooth and successful enrolment within 24 hours had also created a good impression. The Minister for Foreign Affairs thought that in Germany too, the effect might have been good and his information was that troop concentrations had ceased and were perhaps even being reduced. His Majesty's Consul at Liberec reported May 22 that there were no signs of unrest amongst the German population who were impressed by Government's decision and rapidity of action. The local press had definitely moderated their tone.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 276.

<sup>2</sup> No. 250.

<sup>3</sup> No. 240.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)**No. 811 [C 4708/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 22, 1938*

Sir,

I asked the German Ambassador to call this morning, when I enquired whether he had any news. His Excellency said that he had received a telegram yesterday to the effect that the reports that Germany was making military preparations were quite without foundation. The news from the Czecho-slovak frontier districts, however, was disquieting, but the German Government intended to answer it only by silence, without taking any provocative measures. The Ambassador had later received a report of your conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop, and added that Baron von Weizsäcker had also urged you to impress on His Majesty's Government the necessity of speaking at Prague, whilst emphasising that there were no aggressive tendencies in Germany. According to the Ambassador's information from Prague, the Government machinery there was not working smoothly. His advices were to the effect that the position of Dr. Hodza was shaken, and power was passing into the hands of the military. More than one class had been called up there without the Government being informed, and the regular and para-military forces were gaining strength. The Czechoslovak Government, moreover, were spreading false news of German military preparations. It was wholly untrue that the Germans had mobilised eight to ten divisions or, in fact, that they had called anybody to the colours. There was no great moving of troops, such troop movements as there were being merely of a routine and seasonal nature, connected with annual exercises. Herr von Dirksen said that the German Foreign Office wished him to urge that pressure should be exercised in Prague, where strong language was needed.

2. I told his Excellency that we had already telegraphed to Prague about the recent incidents and the need for exercising the greatest forbearance. I impressed upon his Excellency that precipitate German action, whatever the provocation, might compel the French to take counter-action, and I repeated to him the personal message which I had instructed you to convey to Herr von Ribbentrop about our own position. It was of the greatest importance to seek to lower the temperature, and we, for our part, would continue to put pressure on Prague for the avoidance of incidents. I was convinced that we could get a settlement if we were patient, but everyone must help, and it must constantly be borne in mind that, if it ever came to a conflagration, it would be European civilisation as a whole which would suffer. I assured his Excellency that, if there were any direction in which His Majesty's Government could help within the limit of our powers, we should be very glad to do so, and begged him to let me know if his Government had any suggestion of possible action on our part which we were not already taking.

3. His Excellency replied that it would be a great thing if Great Britain and Germany could work together for peace. The danger lay in incidents. If,

for example, 100 Germans were killed in some clash, it would be impossible for Germany not to take action. He added that the German press was a good deal calmer to-day, following on an order from the Ministry of Propaganda to refrain from exaggeration.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 285

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 1071 [C 4707/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 22, 1938

Sir,

The French Ambassador came to see me this afternoon, and told me that, from information that the French Government had received, Prague was quiet and it was raining, and that the Czechoslovak Government thought the military measures which they had taken had exercised a good effect. The German press also, he understood, had been more moderate this morning. This was all to the good.

2. I told the Ambassador of the representations we had made in Berlin, in which a warning on the line of the Prime Minister's speech had, as the French Government knew, been associated with an appeal for patience. I was, however, very much concerned to ensure that the French Government did not in any way fall into the danger of reading more into the Prime Minister's speech of the 24th March than it, in fact, contained. It was, in my view, right that we should have used the strong language in Berlin that we had, in fact, employed, but it was no less important that the French Government should realise the view that we took of the military situation in the case of the worst developments. I fully appreciated the position in which the French Government were placed, but the fact of their obligations, taken with the facts of the military situation, made it essential that they should leave nothing undone to avoid being confronted with the dilemma of choice between war and failure to honour their obligations. I felt I ought again to make it plain, although I had no doubt that it was much in the mind of the French Government, that, while we were bound to assist France to the utmost of our power in the case of unprovoked aggression by Germany, we were not so bound to join forces with her in the event of her going to the assistance of Czechoslovakia.

3. His Excellency said that I need be under no misapprehension as to the realisation of this distinction by the French Government, and that they were doing all they could to avoid an emergence of the dilemma of which I had spoken. On the other hand, they were very sensible of the damage that would be wrought upon the European situation as a whole if the German Government did, in fact, carry out a successful attack on Czechoslovakia. I said that, of course, I fully realised this, but that kind of argument might, though this was not in his mind, be employed to justify what was commonly known

as a preventive war—an idea that I had been glad to hear M. Daladier, when he was in London, repudiate in strong terms. His Excellency expressed his agreement in condemnation of the idea of a preventive war, and repeated the determination of his Government to do everything in their power to assist in finding a peaceful issue to our present anxieties.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 286

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 150 *Telegraphic* [C 4722/1941/18]

PARIS, May 23, 12.53 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

Your telegram No. 141.<sup>2</sup>

I read slowly the above to the Minister for Foreign Affairs at 10.30 o'clock tonight. He took copious notes and thoroughly understood position of His Majesty's Government. He took no exception thereto and promised faithfully that French Government would not dream of taking any action such as described in paragraph 6 of your telegram under reference without ample consultation with His Majesty's Government.

2. M. Bonnet repeated to me that he would readily put any pressure on Czechoslovak Government that you might think at any moment desirable in order to ensure a peaceful solution of Sudeten question. I pointed out that it behoved the Czechs to be more than reasonable, for alternative for them would be total annihilation. His Excellency heartily agreed. Moreover, he said, if Czechoslovakia were really unreasonable the French Government might well declare that France considered herself released from her bond.

3. M. Bonnet remarked that all that the French Government desired was not to be placed before the dreadful alternative of breaking their pledge or of beginning another world war. He thinks Germany, now that Great Britain has spoken so firmly at Berlin, will prefer to get, say seventy per cent. of her desires in Czechoslovakia rather than go to war for the remaining thirty per cent.

4. His Excellency told me in strictest confidence that M. Daladier tonight had a secret and quite private meeting with German Ambassador with whom he was going to talk in a frank and friendly manner as one ex-Service man to another. He has not yet heard the result of that conversation.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted before midnight on May 22-3.

<sup>2</sup> No. 271.

No. 287

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 23, 12.6 p.m.)*

*No. 212 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4714/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 23, 1938

My telegram No. 207.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché drove following route yesterday: Berlin, Frankfort-on-Oder, Liegnitz, Breslau, Oppeln, Kosel, Neustadt, Neisse, Glatz, Frankenstein, Hirschberg, Goerlitz, Cottbus, Wunstorf, Berlin. He saw no definite indication of any troop concentration or any unusual movement. Practically no military traffic on the roads and rail movement appeared normal but amount of passenger rolling stock at Neisse and Glatz appeared abnormally great. Rain and mist along the Czech frontier and he saw only one aeroplane all day. Abnormally few soldiers were walking out in garrison towns. This may have been due equally to bad weather, units at training ground or state of preparedness. S.A. and S.S. personnel were similarly little in evidence. Frontier barracks seen in the evening were fully lighted up. He saw no signs of any armoured unit. Only active preparation was air force signals erecting heavy land line north of Liegnitz, a large party of civil post office officials erecting heavy land line between Krappitz and Klosen [?Kosel] and signal platoon of infantry regiment movements towards Glatz from Frankenstein. Civil population gave no indication of being in any way excited. Assistant Military Attaché returned to-day from reconnaissance of area of Leipsig, Hof, Chemnitz, Danzig.<sup>2</sup> Military Attaché arranged for him to wire anything unusual from Dresden last night. No wire has been received and Military Attaché presumes that he has found the situation normal.

Please inform War Office urgently.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 268-9.

<sup>2</sup> This word appears to be an error for 'Dresden'.

No. 288

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 23, 2.0 p.m.)*

*No. 171 Telegraphic [C 4762/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 23, 12.15 p.m.<sup>1</sup>

My telegram No. 148.<sup>2</sup>

Eger incident.

Minister for Foreign Affairs understands that a note in terms amounting almost to an ultimatum was being prepared at the German Legation . . .<sup>3</sup> He evidently thought intervention by His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was despatched at this hour but appears to have been drafted on May 22.

<sup>2</sup> No. 248.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.



and also statements given to the press by a Foreign Office spokesman had had an important influence on German Government. Minister for Foreign Affairs has now been informed by German Minister at Prague that Herr Hitler intends to send two wreaths to be laid by German Military Attaché on the occasion of the funeral of the two men who had been shot. Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that there would be no objection but that he assumed that wreaths would not be accompanied by any hostile inscriptions on the ribbons. German Minister observed that such inscriptions would be prepared on the responsibility of Herr Hitler and he could not say what the wording would be. German Minister had also . . .<sup>3</sup> told him Military Attaché should be accompanied when laying the wreaths by a military officer. To this Minister for Foreign Affairs had demurred but thought that a high police officer might be deputed. The details are to be arranged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tomorrow.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 289

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 23, 12.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 214 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4718/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 23, 1938

Your telegram No. 178,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 2.

1. United States Ambassador informs me that United States Consul-General at Vienna who visited the whole Czech-Austrian frontier, has reported that he has seen nothing on the German side, but a certain amount of activity on the Czech side. The result of his reconnaissance is therefore similar to that of my Military Attaché given in my immediately following telegram.<sup>2</sup>

2. Though it is naturally impossible to guarantee that no German minor troop movements, which would have been conducted with characteristic German secrecy, have taken place, all evidence is to the contrary.

3. In view of fact that I have been unable to secure any concrete evidence whatsoever of troop movements, it is not possible to give here a picture of the sequence of events (see paragraph 3 of your telegram under reference), but I suggest that Military Attaché at an early date should telegraph his appreciation.

For the moment I should deprecate a meeting between the two Military Attachés in view of German susceptibilities, and the importance of keeping my Military Attaché here on the spot.

I should add none of the British press correspondents here has been able to obtain any information of German troop movements. Vice-Consul at Breslau also made a tour yesterday and saw nothing abnormal.

French Ambassador also informs me that all his enquiries have similarly produced completely negative results.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

No. 290

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 23, 2.45 p.m.)  
No. 152 *Telegraphic* [C 4761/1941/18]

PARIS, May 23, 1938, 1.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 143.<sup>1</sup>

1. M. Bonnet feels sure Czechoslovak Government will be guided by his advice in this matter and agrees that German Government should be informed thereof by us.

2. He doubts possibility of Czechs being able to countermand measures already taken but he will tell me definitely at dinner this evening when I am to see him.

3. I impressed upon M. Bonnet how desirable it is that neither the French nor the Czech press should give way to too much jubilation or to give the impression that Herr Hitler has been in any way humiliated. He quite agrees.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 279.

No. 291

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 24, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 172 *Telegraphic* [C 4788/1941/18]

PRAGUE, May 23, 1938, 6.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 171.<sup>1</sup>

In commenting further on Eger affair Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out to me that the two men although Sudeten Germans were Czech citizens and entirely to blame for what had occurred. A policeman had tried to stop them on entering a town and on their refusal had telephoned to police on other side of the town two of whom had then stood with raised arms in front of motor bicycle. It was only when the men for the second time disregarded police warning and actually rode at and through the two policemen in their way that fatal shot was fired which moreover had been only intended to compel a halt.

Minister for Foreign Affairs was inclined to be indignant at intervention intended by Herr Hitler and to lament generally the hard and unfair treatment suffered by his small country which had behaved so much better than most others towards its minorities. I gave him such comfort as I could but no encouragement in this kind of attitude. In general terms I observed that it was obvious that logic and abstract justice did not as yet prevail in international relations at any rate in the short run and that statesmen must have regard to expediency.

In present critical circumstances it seemed to me that Czechoslovakia

<sup>1</sup> No. 288.

should be as yielding or flexible as possible (I used the German word 'nachgiebig'). The Minister for Foreign Affairs looked a little pained but President of the Council to whom I had previously spoken a few words in the same sense expressed his concurrence.

To the Minister for Foreign Affairs I continued by pointing out that the incident itself coming right on the top of serious warning given to Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin had been most unfortunate. The consequences might have been much more serious and in the circumstances it was not to be expected that there would be no unpleasant result whether strictly justified or not. Moreover as regards accompaniment of German Military Attaché by a Czech police officer it seemed to me as an outside observer that Czechoslovak Government might without humiliation display some regret at untoward death of two men who were as he himself had just stressed Czechoslovak citizens. Possibly therefore participation of Czechoslovak Government in funeral could be so arranged as to help to blunt propaganda effect of Herr Hitler's action and even tend in the direction of a conciliatory gesture. Minister for Foreign Affairs was not very receptive although President of the Council who had already informed me of German demand told me that whoever were President [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> he would meet Herr Hitler's action by sending wreaths himself. President of the Council had not thought however that M. Benes would be prepared to act in such a way and had begged me to make no mention of his remark when talking to Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the text here should read 'if he were President'.

## No. 292

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 149 Telegraphic [C 4718/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 23, 1938, 8.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 143.<sup>1</sup>

You will have seen from Prague telegram No. 170<sup>2</sup> that information of Minister for Foreign Affairs was that German troop concentrations had ceased and were perhaps even being reduced; and you will have observed reassuring character of reports on this subject contained in Berlin telegrams Nos. 212<sup>3</sup> and 214.<sup>4</sup>

This information would, I think, place the French Government in a strong position to suggest to the Czechoslovak Government that they should countermand at least some of the measures they have taken, and you should put this to the French Government.<sup>5</sup>

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 279.

<sup>2</sup> No. 283.

<sup>3</sup> No. 287.

<sup>4</sup> No. 289.

<sup>5</sup> Sir E. Phipps telegraphed in the morning of May 24 that his telegram 153 (No. 296) would show that he had already acted in the sense suggested above.

No. 293

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 111 Telegraphic [C 4851/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 23, 1938, 8.50 p.m.*

My telegram No. 105.<sup>1</sup>

1. If, as reported in your telegram No. 175<sup>2</sup> Herr Henlein is being received, this would give the Czechoslovak Government an opportunity for indicating that they are resolved to proceed on large lines.

2. It looks as though the German Government intend to go slow for the time being. But it might be fatal if Czechoslovak Government were to think this a reason for drawing back: on the contrary their best policy would be to come forward with the most generous offer and attempt to clinch a settlement.

3. Please represent this in the proper quarter.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram, sent at 12.30 p.m. on May 23, reported that Dr. Hodza was expecting to see Herr Henlein that evening or next morning.

No. 294

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 23, 11.0 p.m.)*

*No. 218 Telegraphic [C 4778/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *May 23, 1938, 9.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 180.<sup>1</sup>

State Secretary has just informed me that Minister for Foreign Affairs feels that if proposed despatch of an observer would in your opinion have effect of avoiding further incidents it would be useful.

He suggested that it would help to improve the atmosphere if Czechs would withdraw their troops from the frontier and release classes called up last week.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 281.

No. 295

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 24, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 217 Telegraphic [C 4785/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *May 23, 1938, 9.46 p.m.*

Though I am unaware of what may have transpired yesterday at Berchtesgaden my view is that everything depends now on actions or hesitations of Czechoslovak Government. Our moderating influence may have had decisive effect during the week-end but it is a diminishing asset so long as nothing is *done* at Prague to prove that our *démarche* there has had practical

effect. In my conversations with von Ribbentrop his attitude was that our intervention at Prague had already failed and that German action would consequently be justified. I argued of course to the contrary and the German Government are probably not yet ready to abandon confidence in us but it will be increasingly difficult to retain that confidence if next time I cannot adduce tangible results.

I spoke in this sense to Czechoslovakian Minister when he came to see me this morning and deplored M. Benes's omission to mention administrative autonomy in his speech of Saturday. This had led the Germans to believe M. Benes was even going back on what Hodza had already half promised and confirmed them in their deep suspicion that M. Benes is not really in earnest. I could not, I said, go (on) fighting, as I had very vigorously done, M. Benes's battles for him with Germans without powder or shot. If the German confidence in British sincerity was to be maintained it was essential for Czechoslovak Government to give concrete evidence of a change of heart. Nothing short of a 'comprehensive' scheme of reform was calculated to carry conviction and we were still at the mercy of any untoward incident.

I also told Czechoslovakian Minister that in my opinion conversation which is taking place this evening between Henlein and Hodza might serve as a good opportunity for Czechoslovak Government to release the classes called up last week. I mentioned that I had reason to believe that such a step will have good effect here.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

#### No. 296

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 23, 11.30 p.m.)  
No. 153 *Telegraphic* [C 4790/1941/18]

PARIS, May 23, 1938, 9.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 152.<sup>1</sup>

1. I told M. Bonnet this evening that all reports received by us from our Military Attachés at Berlin, from United States Consul-General, Vienna etc., show that there had been no particular German troop movements towards Czechoslovakian frontiers.

2. M. Bonnet will therefore instruct the French Minister at Prague to urge Czechoslovak Government 'tactfully but firmly' to proceed totally or anyhow partially with demobilisation of two classes that they called up. Stress will be laid on desirability of showing that military are not in any way in control at Prague. French Minister will also be told to urge the Czechoslovak Government to proceed at once to negotiations with Henlein (who has returned to Prague) on a very generous basis, this being more than ever necessary after increase of Sudeten vote yesterday.

3. M. Bonnet asked on what basis His Majesty's Government would wish

<sup>1</sup> No. 290.



Prague negotiations to proceed. I therefore gave him a sketch of Henlein talks in London and remarked that I supposed it would have to be on a large basis of administrative autonomy for Sudeten.

4. All here including M. Bonnet pay generous tribute to decisive influence exercised by His Majesty's Government in causing present *détente*.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

No. 297

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 24, 5.45 p.m.)*

*No. 220 Telegraphic [C 4809/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *May 24, 1938, 4.25 p.m.*

Polish Ambassador called on me yesterday and spontaneously gave me assurances as regards general attitude of his country and on lines of Warsaw telegram No. 38.<sup>1</sup> I spoke to him in the sense of your instructions to Sir H. Kennard and begged him to use all his influence with the German Government in moderating sense.

I derived the impression that he was speaking under instructions. If so it is indication that line adopted by His Majesty's Government is having salutary (? effect) not only on Germany as I hoped but also on Germany's neighbours (see also Belgrade telegram No. 54 Saving).<sup>2</sup>

If this is so there will probably not be a better moment for solution of Sudeten question provided comparative lull does not encourage M. Benes to shuffle. However distasteful it may be I am profoundly convinced that we should use firmest possible language at Prague and insist on really comprehensive scheme of settlement. If the Sudeten are ever to be transformed into contented citizens they must, in words confidentially expressed to me by . . .<sup>3</sup> here, be bribed to do so. Half measures will be worse than useless since only result will be that Henlein extremist followers will at once gain the upper hand. I am fully alive to the danger of whetting appetites, already over-stimulated, nevertheless the risk in that respect is less than that involved by offering too little.

My French colleague, to whom I spoke today, has undertaken to telegraph in similar sense as above to his Government.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> A name is here omitted.

No. 298

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 24, 7.15 p.m.)  
*No. 180 Telegraphic [C 4808/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 24, 1938, 5.15 p.m.

My telegram 178.<sup>1</sup>

I have received a telephone message on behalf of the President of the Council saying that he had had a two hours' conversation yesterday evening with Herr Henlein who was accompanied by Herr Frank and Dr. Neuwirth. At request of President of Council Herr Henlein promised to formulate his demands in writing by the end of the week. It was requested that this information meagre as it is should be regarded as confidential. Minister for Foreign Affairs whom I have just seen could only add that he believed the President of Council was not displeased.

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a press announcement that Herr Henlein and Herr Frank were received by Dr. Hodza on May 23.

No. 299

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) and to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 193<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic [C 4903/4903/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 24, 1938, 5.45 p.m.

It has occurred to me that it might be useful to you, as it would also be to us here, if Mr. Strang were to pay you and Mr. Newton  
Sir N. Henderson a brief visit in the immediate future in order to discuss the German-Czechoslovak situation generally and at the same time to supplement our telegraphic correspondence by a personal exchange of views and impressions. Mr. Strang will be in a position to explain to you my own ideas as to the present and possible future developments, and I shall be glad if you on your part will give him an appreciation of the situation as seen from your post.

I do not propose that Mr. Strang should have any contacts with German or Czech Ministers or officials, nor with any representatives of the Sudeten Germans. The purpose of the visit is personal contact with His Majesty's Representatives.

Mr. Strang will arrive at Prague by train at 6.5 p.m. on Thursday May 26 and would propose to reach Berlin at 3.8 p.m. on Saturday May 28, returning to London via Paris.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 193 to Berlin: No. 115 to Prague.

<sup>2</sup> For Mr. Strang's visit, see Nos. 349 and 350.

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)*

*No. 329 Telegraphic [C 4720/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 24, 1938, 6.00 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 471.<sup>1</sup>

I approve your action and language.

Principal concern of His Majesty's Government has been to use all their influence, wherever it could be effective, on the side of restraint in word and deed, while keeping open the way to peaceful negotiation of a satisfactory settlement.

We should of course welcome any action which the Minister for Foreign Affairs might be able to take on the same lines.

Repeated to Berlin, Prague, Paris, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 282.

No. 301

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 25, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 156 Telegraphic [C 4841/1941/18]*

PARIS, *May 24, 1938, 7.10 p.m.*

My telegram No. 153.<sup>1</sup>

M. Bonnet tells me that after I saw him last night he again spoke with the utmost severity to M. Osusky and urged him to return at once to Prague in order to convince M. Benes of the vital necessity of acting quickly and generously. M. Osusky seemed very much impressed and returned to Prague by air this morning.

2. M. Bonnet told me that the French Minister at Prague reported that M. Hodza and M. Krofta were moderate and reasonable but M. Benes much less so. I replied that our information was to the same effect. I added that this did not surprise me, having during the years I spent in Vienna deplored the persistent refusal of M. Benes to lift a finger to help Austria. At the Hague Reparations Conference M. Benes far from helping Austria had produced a ridiculous bill against her, well knowing that she could not pay a penny of it.

3. I expressed the hope that very firm and persistent pressure would be brought to bear upon M. Benes by the French Government for it would be intolerable if he were to be allowed to wreck the now brighter chances of a peaceful settlement.

M. Bonnet entirely agreed and promised that this should be done.

4. His Excellency asked that his grateful thanks should be conveyed to Your Lordship for your firm attitude towards Germany; this, in his opinion, has more than anything else caused the present *détente*.

5. M. Bonnet at the same time paid tribute to reasonable attitude of the

<sup>1</sup> No. 296.

German Government and agreed that the Czechs must now on their side make a large and generous contribution to the cause of peace.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

No. 302

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 25, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 181 Telegraphic [4843/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 24, 1938, 9.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 105,<sup>1</sup> first paragraph.

I believe story to be tendencious and based on a report emanating from Sudeten German sources and given wide distribution here that decision to call up reservists was taken without agreement with the Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. I should be glad to learn from what other quarters the story is being spread.

From sources which agree and are likely to be well-informed, I have obtained the following account of how decision was taken. Chief of General Staff was genuinely alarmed at the reports of German troop movements and pressed the Government to call up five classes. When they hesitated he went to the President, who said the matter demanded a meeting of the Cabinet. At that meeting it was decided not to call up five classes, but that Minister of Defence should be authorized, on his own responsibility, to call up one class as he is entitled to do by law. It may have been the case that President of the Council and Minister of the Interior remained doubtful of the wisdom of decision for which, however, the Minister of Defence had to bear the responsibility. They nevertheless accepted the decision and when I saw the President on Sunday he seemed perfectly satisfied, indeed pleased, with the success of the measure taken which had no doubt considerably strengthened the hand of the Government. So far as I have heard from any reliable source, there are no divisions in the Cabinet. The Government was already in full control and its authority has now been enhanced.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton telegraphed (tel. No. 195) at 9.15 p.m. on May 25 that he had been informed by the President of the Council that, while he (the President) had opposed the call-up of five classes, he had been definitely in favour of the call-up of one class under powers possessed by the Minister of Defence. This latter decision had been approved by the whole Cabinet.

No. 303

*Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 25, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 474 Telegraphic [C 4838/1941/18]*

ROME, May 24, 1938, 10.45 p.m.

Count Ciano remarked to me today that he had been a good deal pressed when I had talked to him on Saturday and Sunday about the Czechoslovak

crisis. Then he had only spoken according to his own judgment. Now he had actual knowledge for his belief, that provided the Czechoslovak Government was reasonable and did not create fresh difficulties, a real *détente* could be achieved.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

No. 304

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received May 26)

No. 162 Saving: *Telegraphic* [C 4959/1941/18]

PRAGUE, May 24, 1938

Paris telegram No. 145<sup>1</sup> and Berlin telegram No. 206.<sup>2</sup>

While the first reports of German troop movements may have been exaggerated, and conceivably even purposely exaggerated, by the Czech General Staff, who may have had the ulterior motive of seeking an opportunity to conduct a trial military exercise as well as to reassert State authority in the Sudeten areas, nevertheless it is difficult to believe that they had not some genuine reason for uneasiness. The first rumours of German troop movements actually came from Germany itself (see Berlin telegrams No. 193<sup>3</sup> and 194<sup>4</sup>). It is generally agreed too that the information of the Czech General Staff of German troop movements during the time of the 'Anschluss' was extremely accurate, so it seems reasonable to credit the general accuracy of their information in the present instance too. There is the further point that German aircraft was [were] reported to have been flying provocatively over Czech territory on May 20 (my telegram 142<sup>5</sup>).

In any case His Majesty's Government will no doubt have formed an opinion of the truth of the matter from the reports which will have reached them from all quarters.

But even if the reports produced by the Czech General Staff were exaggerated, the German Government cannot seriously maintain that the enrolment of one class of Czech reservists was an act of aggression against Germany. Their real complaint of Czech wickedness can only be that the Czechs showed their intention to defend themselves if attacked, and the fact that the Czech action is represented as one of madness and provocation can only create suspicions of Germany's good faith.

Such suspicions are enhanced by the spreading of reports that Dr. Benes and the Czech extremists want to force an issue now rather than later. It is inconceivable that any responsible Czechs would wish to force an issue either now or later, but in any case they would not wish to do so now, seeing that their powers of defence will be far greater next year than this. Nor is it an argument to say that Germany also will be stronger next year, for, as the Military Attaché points out, the relative strength of defence is normally

<sup>1</sup> No. 256.

<sup>2</sup> No. 255.

<sup>3</sup> No. 232.

<sup>4</sup> No. 233.

<sup>5</sup> No. 244.



assumed to be greater than that of offence, so that Czechoslovakia will be relatively as well as actually stronger next year.

The Czechs had moreover special reasons in this instance for doubting German good faith. Field Marshal Göring has lately been making no secret of his intention to liquidate Czechoslovakia this summer (cf. Paris telegram No. 144),<sup>6</sup> the German press has recently been more than ordinarily unfriendly, leaflets originating from over the border have been distributed among the Czech population with the obvious design of breaking their nerve, there have been the ominous statements already referred to that the Czechs themselves wish to force an issue, and finally the Henlein party, who are obviously in Berlin's pocket, had been finding one pretext after another to postpone the opening of negotiations.

With the Austrian example before them the Czechoslovak Government had good reason to think that Germany *might* be contemplating an immediate attack. But it might equally have appeared to the Czechs that Germany might only be carrying out a gradual concentration of troops round the frontier so as to put herself in a position to make an immediate attack at any suitable moment.

In either event the Czechoslovak Government were surely not only within their rights in taking some counter measures, but they owed it to their own population to do so. To have waited might not only have been an unjustifiable risk, but it might in the long run have made inevitable the taking of still more 'provocative' measures, viz., of mobilising when German troops were already stationed near the frontiers.

Finally if the German Government were sincere they might appreciate the fact that adequate strength was the best means of keeping order without bloodshed.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>6</sup> No. 241.

No. 305

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 836 [C 4840/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 24, 1938

Sir,

I asked the German Ambassador to come and see me this afternoon, and I enquired of him whether he had any further news of importance from Germany. He said he had no recent news, but that he felt the general situation to be greatly eased. I told him that was also my impression.

2. I told his Excellency that, following on what he had said to me on Sunday afternoon as to the quieter tone of the German press that morning, I had myself seen all the British press on Sunday evening and had exhorted them to adopt a moderate tone on Monday morning, on the line of saying that at that juncture it was essential that the efforts of all well-disposed per-

sons should be concentrated upon diminishing rather than aggravating differences, and upon trying to smooth the path to a return to negotiation. I thought that the press had responded well to this appeal, and hoped that he has perhaps noticed it. The Ambassador said that he had observed it and had welcomed it. I told him that I was glad to learn this from him and that I was accordingly encouraged to say something further to him on the same subject. I noticed a report in 'The Times' today from their German correspondent, as to which I had no other information, to the effect that the German press this morning were again writing in a very critical mood of us. I did not, in the first place, understand what possible ground there could be for this, and British opinion would resent it. I should be grateful, therefore, if he could tell me what was the explanation of this German press line, and I hoped that he would perhaps feel able to say a word in Berlin if he himself thought that the line was unjustified. His Excellency told me that he had no direct information, but that he supposed that it was due to a feeling in Germany that we were treating the Czechs and the Germans on a fifty-fifty basis, whereas, inasmuch as the Czechs had mobilised troops and the Germans had not, it might have been more reasonable to treat the matter on a seventy-thirty basis in favour of the Germans. I said, in reply to this, that no useful purpose would be served by either side giving rein to their critical faculty at a moment when we all ought to be concentrating on the influence that made for progress.

3. The Ambassador volunteered that he thought the parliamentary statement yesterday<sup>1</sup> had been admirably objective, and that he could not have suggested any alteration in the sense of greater fairness in it. I said I was very glad to have his view about this, as the utmost care had been taken in the preparation of the statement to protect it from any charge of partiality, and I hoped he would make his view known in Berlin. As to the press, I urged him to pass the word to Berlin in favour of moderation, and I told him of the friendly interview that I had had with Dr. Goebbels when I was there in November, the spirit of which I hoped might be still maintained between us. The Ambassador said he would certainly telegraph in this sense and that he had himself been rather disturbed to read what was said in 'The Times' about the tone of the German press.

4. His Excellency asked me whether we had any news about the Czechs demobilising any of the troops they had called up. I said that we had no such news at present, but that we had suggested to the French Government two days ago that they might use their influence with the Czech Government at that moment against calling up any more. That the French Government had, I believed, done. He said that he understood that the Czech Government were withdrawing their troops further from the frontier, which was all to the good. I said that I would enquire whether they were, in fact, demobilising any of those recently called up.

<sup>1</sup> For this statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons and Viscount Halifax in the House of Lords see Parl. Deb. 5th Ser., H. of C., Vol. 336, cols. 824-6; and H. of L., Vol. 109, cols. 284-6.

5. I asked his Excellency whether he had formed any judgment of the elections so far as they had been held. To this he replied that they appeared to show that the Henlein party voted pretty solid and had attracted also the votes of the other German parties formerly co-operating with the Government. I said that I myself drew the deduction that the large vote recorded in several predominantly German districts for Herr Henlein showed that the elections had been freely conducted without intimidation. The Ambassador said that he himself would word this conclusion rather differently in the sense that it was rather the fact that there had been comparative immunity from incidents that showed that the elections had been free. In such predominantly German districts the only way of preventing people from voting would have been by force, which evidently had not been exercised, and this was to the good. His Excellency agreed with me that the important thing now was the avoidance of incidents, restraint on all sides and material progress, with genuine efforts all round to reach a settlement. I assured the Ambassador in conclusion that our only purpose in all this affair was to assist the peaceful solutions of these highly-charged issues, and I repeated to him what I had said on an earlier occasion that, if at any time there was anything we could do to this end which we were not doing, I asked him to let me know.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 306

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 25, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 185 Telegraphic [C 4863/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 25, 1938, 2.45 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

The impression made on our minds here by Berlin telegrams Nos. 207<sup>2</sup> and 217<sup>3</sup> is one of serious doubt as to good faith of German Government.

The Henlein party, who almost certainly take their orders from Reich, have been demanding satisfaction of undefined and in fact undefinable, conditions before they would even consent to negotiate for a settlement.

They have now come out with yet one further demand of a kind which directly affects the sovereignty of the State and strikes at its capacity to defend itself against internal or external aggression.

As appears from part three of my telegram No. 148,<sup>4</sup> I consider the suggestion that M. Benes, or any other responsible leader here wishes to provoke a conflict now to be extremely mischievous tendencious propaganda the spreading of which reflects further on German sincerity. It is also cynical of the State Secretary to complain seriously of [*sic*] that in a speech which promised what Herr Hitler himself has most insisted upon, namely equality, M. Benes makes no mention of administrative autonomy when President of the Council who is

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted before midnight on May 24-5.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 268-9.

<sup>3</sup> No. 295.

<sup>4</sup> No. 253.

more directly concerned with actual negotiations, had just before announced self-administration would be one of main principles of the generous and far reaching settlement which he desired to make. If nothing more is *done* at Prague it is now not the fault of Czechoslovak Government but solely because of one excuse after another the Sudeten leaders postpone acceptance of a definite and formal invitation to negotiate.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

### No. 307

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*

*(Received May 25, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 186 Telegraphic [4872/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *May 25, 1938, 2.45 a.m.*<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

My telegram No. 180.<sup>2</sup>

President of the Council has informed me that Herr Henlein declared that he was ready to negotiate but not until military measures had been revoked. He could not negotiate under pressure.

The President of the Council had replied in effect; neither could he, apart from the fact that a military measure affecting the sovereignty and authority of the State did not concern Herr Henlein. President of the Council had pointed out its revocation could easily be misused to provoke a renewal of the crisis. The measure had had excellent results throughout the country and the President of the Council could not take the responsibility of imperilling them. He appealed therefore to Herr Henlein to withdraw his condition pointing out that on Herr Henlein and himself rested an immense responsibility before Europe and their own people. President of the Council said no time should be lost in discussing at once the question of self-administration for if that could be cleared up a solution of other questions would be facilitated.

Herr Henlein would not withdraw his condition but it was agreed that they should remain in contact. Herr Henlein said that he would communicate his demands on Saturday in writing. This proposal was not made at the President of the Council's request as stated in telephone message communicated in my above-mentioned telegram. On the contrary the President of the Council thought such a procedure dangerous as it would be difficult to deviate in any way from demands committed to writing. The President of the Council will therefore do what he can to engage Herr Henlein in private and preliminary discussions.

Herr Henlein declared his adherence to the points of his Carlsbad speech but added that they had been much misunderstood and that he had given reassuring explanations of them in London. The President of the Council

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was despatched as stated above, but drafted before midnight on May 24-5.

<sup>2</sup> No. 298.

asked whether I could give him any information as to what these explanations were. I replied that I did not know whether it would be possible to give him such information in fairness to Herr Henlein. Moreover if obtained by President of the Council from Herr Henlein direct they would be much more binding. At the same time I thought I could satisfy him that Herr Henlein had given the impression that he would not be unreasonable in the negotiations and I suggested that the Czechoslovak Minister in London might be requested to supply further details.

President of the Council said that he had heard that at the instance of the German Government the question of advisability of repeal of military measures taken might be under consideration in London and Paris. He evidently thought that sudden production of this new preliminary condition by Herr Henlein might have been pre-arranged with German Government. Knowing from your telegram No. 149<sup>3</sup> to Paris that such a suggestion was in fact under consideration I interrogated President of the Council as to his reasons for refusing to accept this apparently last condition for start of negotiations. He was very emphatic that it would be very dangerous to withdraw the soldiers now. He said that it would be sheer madness and he would be a fool to do so.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Rome.

No. 292.<sup>3</sup>

#### No. 308

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*(Received May 25, 4.30 p.m.)*

*No. 186 Telegraphic [C 4872/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 25, 1938, 3.10 p.m.<sup>1</sup>

#### PART 2

The Sudeten and the Czech frontier population, as also cities of Prague [and] Brno, contained very radical elements. So soon as the troops had been called up all demonstrations which they had been making immediately ceased. The release of the troops might result in violent demonstrations and clashes between the Germans and the Czechs, the present feeling of security would be gone and on both sides the population would energetically take the law into their own hands. Last Sunday he was in his office most of the night and knew from reports which he received that it was only possible to maintain calm and order because population could be assured when necessary that all adequate measures had been taken to preserve order and the authority of the State.

President of the Council agreed that Sudeten Germans might be willing and able to maintain order among their own people but he had to consider also Czechs. I asked him how long he contemplated maintenance of the

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was despatched as stated above, but drafted before midnight on May 24-5.



measure. He said it would be impossible for him to take responsibility of abandoning it until at any rate after elections nor, if Germans were sincere in wanting to avoid incidents, ought they even to desire him to do so. If Berlin therefore had inspired this condition or were disposing Herr Henlein to refuse to negotiate, President of the Council begged that His Majesty's Government would use their influence to persuade the German Government to help and not to hinder negotiations.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Rome.

### No. 309

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 25, 4.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 187 Telegraphic [C 4906/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 25, 1938, 2.46 p.m.

My telegram No. 186.<sup>1</sup>

As President of the Council was accompanying me to the door at the end of an interview which had lasted nearly an hour and a half he asked very seriously what I thought Germany's intentions really were.

Equally seriously I replied that in my opinion Germany was determined to have a thorough settlement. The only question was whether it was to be accomplished by peaceful or violent means. During last few days it had looked as though extremists might have won the day. Now perhaps there would be a breathing space in which to achieve a peaceful solution. Unless that could be achieved quite soon the danger of a settlement by violence would recur. President asked how long I thought he would have. I said with . . .<sup>2</sup> only a few weeks and much would depend on convincing Germans that Czechoslovak Government really meant to do their utmost.

Having since read Berlin telegrams Nos. 207<sup>3</sup> and 217<sup>4</sup> I fear that I may have been too optimistic and that German wolf may be already attributing its own motives to a victim which it is determined to devour. Please see in this connexion my telegram No. 185<sup>5</sup> and also my Saving telegram No. 162<sup>6</sup> on its way by bag.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 307-8.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 268-9.

<sup>4</sup> No. 295.

<sup>5</sup> No. 306.

<sup>6</sup> No. 304.

### No. 310

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 194 Telegraphic [C 4778/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1938, 2.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 218.<sup>1</sup>

1. As shown in my telegram No. 180,<sup>2</sup> our original intention was that this observer should report on the situation in the Sudeten districts, whereas the

<sup>1</sup> No. 294.

<sup>2</sup> No. 281.

German Minister for Foreign Affairs seems to hope that by his intervention he might be able to avert further incidents. It would I fear be impossible for us to give him any such assurance. In the circumstances I think it would be better that you should not revert to the question with the German Government until we have had an opportunity of studying further the feasibility of the scheme in all its aspects.

2. I am meanwhile considering whether it might be possible for us to go some way towards meeting what is apparently in Herr von Ribbentrop's mind if we were to arrange to keep the proposed observer (who might be the Military Attaché) in Prague in readiness to proceed to investigate any incident which might threaten serious consequences. This, of course, would have to be done in agreement with the Czech Government and in the first instance I propose to consult His Majesty's Minister at Prague on the value and feasibility of such an arrangement.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

No. 311

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 118 Telegraphic [C 4778/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1938, 3.5 p.m.

My telegram to Berlin No. 194.<sup>1</sup>

I shall be glad to have your views on the proposal adumbrated in the above telegram, or any variations thereof which may seem to you preferable. It would be useful if you would discuss this matter with Mr. Strang when he arrives on Thursday.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 310.

No. 312

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 119 Telegraphic [C 4840/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1938, 8.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 149<sup>1</sup> to Paris.

The German Ambassador told me yesterday that he understood that the Czechoslovak Government were withdrawing their troops from the frontier and asked whether we had any news. I said I would make enquiries. I should be grateful for any information you can give me as to whether the Czechoslovak Government have received and are acting upon the advice which M. Bonnet promised to instruct the French Minister to give them (see Paris telegram No. 153<sup>2</sup> to me) and are either demobilising any of the reservists recently called up or failing that withdrawing troops from the frontier.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 292.

<sup>2</sup> No. 296.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 26, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 230 Telegraphic [C 4930/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 25, 1938, 10.10 p.m.

Prague telegram No. 185.<sup>1</sup>

Good faith of the German Government is a very relative term. Their policy is purely opportunist and will remain until German unity as aspired by Herr Hitler is achieved. In present case their aims are obvious: namely, either (a) to incorporate Sudeten districts in Germany or (b) to leave Sudetens where they are provided they obtain such measure of autonomy as would ensure a neutral instead of a hostile Czechoslovakia.

Unless Europe—which in the end means Great Britain—is prepared to compel the Sudetens by force (which will alone avail) permanently to remain unwilling subjects of Czechoslovak Government at Prague we have to decide which of the two courses above is the least disagreeable and dangerous. I assume that it is the second. Yet even the second becomes illusory if Hitler extremists are allowed to get the upper hand. As I see the position here today a struggle is going on between them and moderates (of whom I believe Hitler himself in his saner moments to be one) as to whether the whole nettle should not be grasped immediately regardless of risks and consequences or whether a mild solution should not now be sought on the ground that risks today are too great and would probably be less later. A fortnight ago when we began our intervention at Prague I believe the latter policy held the field. Today I am far less optimistic even after our efforts and warnings of last week.

It is this aspect of the position which is my chief concern. A war prevented may be a war altogether averted. When I urge that something should be done at Prague it is with conviction that unless something is done extremist followers not only of Hitler but of Henlein will win the day.

It is for this reason that I view with the utmost apprehension deadlock which seems certain over military measures (see Prague telegram No. 186<sup>2</sup>). Slogan that negotiations are impossible under threat of bayonets will prevail here. Moderates will be unable to resist it and extremists will take every advantage of it. The attitude of foreign press in claiming democratic victory in the crisis of last week-end has not been helpful in this respect. It has offended Hitler who ascribes fact that nothing happened to German, or his own, moderation. German Government will undoubtedly refuse to advise Henlein to waive this condition. Much as I regret to say so that is, I fear, my considered opinion. I shall of course urge them with all the earnestness which I can command to do so but I cannot say that I have any hope of being successful.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest, Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 307-8.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 26, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 196 Telegraphic [C 4917/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 25, 1938, 10.35 p.m.

Your telegrams 111<sup>1</sup> and 115.<sup>2</sup>

You will be aware from my telegrams Nos. 164<sup>3</sup> and 170<sup>4</sup> that I made representations very much in the sense indicated both to President of the Council and to Minister for Foreign Affairs on Sunday. When President of the Council spoke to me then of enhancement of authority of Government which had resulted from their military measures I made the very point that Germans often complained that Czechoslovak Government only acted under pressure, that it would therefore be disastrous if there were any sign of drawing back and that on the contrary they should use their enhanced authority to go if possible even further. President of the Council expressed his entire concurrence and this was of course the day before his interview with Herr Henlein.

Yesterday I renewed these representations both to President of the Council and to Minister for Foreign Affairs to both of whom I read your telegram No. 111 and paragraphs 2 and 3 of your telegram No. 105.<sup>5</sup> They showed that they remained entirely convinced of absolute accuracy and importance of your advice. As regards further public offers it is however hardly possible to go further than they have now done if there are to be any negotiations at all, see in this connexion my telegrams Nos. 184<sup>6</sup> and 185.<sup>7</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me furthermore that he had impressed on the Cabinet that it would be most foolish to consider that danger was over or even diminished. He had pointed out that on the contrary they were in a particularly critical period because Herr Hitler or some of his leaders, who had in Dr. Krofta's opinion probably been meditating some stroke, might be suffering from sense of frustration or irritation. Press were therefore being rigidly controlled and warned in particular to refrain from any suggestion that democracies had scored a success. Dr. Krofta hoped that British and French journalists would be equally alive to this danger.

Minister for Foreign Affairs went on to draw my attention to appeal which had been issued to population to continue to maintain calm and order (my telegram No. 179<sup>8</sup>). In addition, said the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the party leaders had agreed to use their influence with their respective parties to this end. A satisfactory feature had been the attitude of the Communists who had also been approached on May 23 by M. Bechyne leader of Czech Social-Democrat party and incidentally also Vice-President of the Council. They had promised to remain absolutely quiet and do nothing to provoke any dis-

<sup>1</sup> No. 293.

<sup>2</sup> No. 299. The reference may be a mistake for telegram 105 (No. 277).

<sup>3</sup> No. 276.

<sup>4</sup> No. 283.

<sup>5</sup> No. 277.

<sup>6</sup> Not printed.

<sup>7</sup> No. 306.

<sup>8</sup> Not printed.

turbance. Minister for Foreign Affairs thought they might have had a hint from Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Please repeat to Paris.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>9</sup> The text as first received was here uncertain. It was subsequently corrected to run as above. See Nos. 331, 333 and 342.

### No. 315

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

No. 262 [C 4915/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1938

Sir,

The Czechoslovak Minister called to see me this afternoon as he was going to Prague to-morrow. I told him that it seemed to me of the utmost importance that no doubt should be left in the mind of the Czechoslovak Government and of the President as to our feeling with regard to the importance of the most expeditious action on their part. We had got over the crisis of last week-end and had gained time, but that time must be immediately used to good advantage. M. Masaryk told me that he should certainly use all his influence in this sense, and that he felt very sure that his Government were fully alive to the necessity of so acting. He said that he had heard from the President of the Council, who had told him that, in his interview yesterday with Herr Henlein, they had agreed upon the importance of the avoidance of incidents and upon the best methods by which this avoidance could be achieved. The funeral of the two Sudeten Germans who had been shot had passed off without incidents, and he was sanguine that the same would happen at the next batch of elections on Sunday.

2. I told the Minister that I thought it was unsafe to rely upon the situation remaining static from the point of view which might argue that the reasons which had induced the German Government to exercise moderation on this occasion would be equally potent on all other occasions in the near future, until they felt themselves stronger. Such an argument seemed to me to leave out of account the possibility that in given circumstances, such as any particularly startling incident, it might be practically impossible for Herr Hitler to control his own extremists, and that, therefore, this logical conclusion would break down. In these circumstances, I thought that his Government, and, indeed, all of us, ought to be applying our minds to the problem of the larger settlement.

3. While I thought it had been right, and I hoped useful, to use firm language as we had done in Berlin, we ought, as between ourselves, to be prepared to face all the facts without attempting to minimise their true significance. Speaking personally, I thought that the least which the Czechoslovak Government would be able to get away with on the internal side would be something that could be reasonably represented as autonomy on what might be termed the Swiss model. In regard to the external side of policy, it



had always seemed to me that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the Czechoslovak Government to abandon their French and Russian connexions at the naked dictation of the German Government. At the same time it had to be remembered that the French Government had accepted their obligations towards Czechoslovakia under conditions very different from those which prevailed to-day. Germany had been disarmed and France had held the key of the German back-door so long as the Rhineland was demilitarised. These conditions no longer prevailed, and, while France would no doubt have certainly done her best to honour her obligations had the necessity arisen, and while, as I had said, we had repeated the warning of March 24 at Berlin, there was no good concealing from ourselves how unsatisfactory from the military point of view the general prospects were of preserving Czechoslovakia, if Germany ever decided to adopt extreme courses.

4. If, therefore, it was impossible to contemplate Czechoslovakia abandoning her foreign connexions at German dictation, and if, in fact, the military protection of Czechoslovakia in the worst event was, to say the least, problematical, was it not worth while considering very carefully the idea of the adoption by the Czechoslovak Government of a position of neutrality? This might be represented as the contribution of the Czechoslovak Government to the peace of Europe, and it would in the way least savouring of external dictation, get rid of the elements in the present position that were particularly the source of German resentment. Such a state of neutrality might, for what it was worth, be guaranteed by the neighbours of Czechoslovakia and duly taken note of by other Powers. I told M. Masaryk that I was speaking in a purely personal capacity and as a friend, but I hoped that his Government would not be unwilling to consider these general ideas.

5. They might very well ask what elements of permanence there were in any such solution. The answer to that, I felt, was that there was no such element of permanence to be found, but that it might truly be argued that they would at least be in no worse position than they were to-day with guarantees that could not be effectually exercised in time to save them, and that they might be reckoned to be so much better off, inasmuch as under some such plan the principal elements of provocation to Germany would no longer exist.

6. In another direction I was fully alive to the necessity of doing everything that we could to strengthen the position of his country and others in South-East Europe against the monopoly of German economic domination. It had always seemed to me that that was the more probable threat to their independence than any other. We were examining the possibilities of action in these several directions, and I was not unhopeful that we might be able to do something along that line. M. Masaryk thanked me for what I had said and assured me that he fully realised both the urgency and the wisdom of giving full examination to these several possibilities.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27)*

*No. 528 [C 4985/4786/18]*

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *May 25, 1938*

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Embassy on the question of German troop movements and their relation to the Czechoslovak crisis.

I have the honour, etc.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 316

BERLIN, *May 24, 1938*

*The Ambassador*

1. In view of the numerous reports which have recently been circulating regarding alleged movements of German troops in connection with the German-Czechoslovak situation, I would like to point out that there are in fact considerable normal and abnormal troop movements going on in Germany, but that the bulk of the abnormal ones have in all possibility no connection with the recent crisis.

2. The Czech General Staff may well have received many reports of troop movements which may equally well have been in some respects accurate. They appear however to have drawn many false deductions and they have been guilty of much exaggeration and of invention as well. They have possibly done this deliberately. The fact, however, remains that as long as German units continue to be moved about as much as they are being moved this spring, it will be difficult in moments of great tension to avoid sinister conclusions being drawn, and it is not always possible to obtain rapid confirmation or otherwise of what may well appear to be at the time legitimate deductions.

3. I know for certain that within the past few days trains containing respectively an Anti-Aircraft unit, and tanks have left stations in Berlin. I have been told by the War Ministry that several units, including one Battalion of the 67th Infantry Regiment from Spandau have very recently been sent to Austria so as to give demonstrations and instruction to the 'Austrian' Army, and incidentally to get to know something of Austria. Austrian units are coming to Germany to replace them. Units of the 23rd Division now in camp at Zossen are to be 'alarmiert' next Thursday. This exercise will entail the units being suddenly ordered to turn out and march off to some previously unknown destination.

4. Agents and other sources of information doubtless report moves of this description, and, in addition, the many moves by both road and rail which take place in the ordinary course of moving units to and from Training Camps. Such moves will generally be reported in the form that 'such and such a unit was seen starting from somewhere', or 'on the move somewhere

else in a certain direction'. A nervous General Staff may to a certain extent be excused for placing the worst construction on such information.

5. I understand that the past critical days happened to coincide with a period during which reliefs of units at Training Grounds were being carried out all over the country. I can well imagine that the General Staff at Prague received any number of seemingly alarming reports.

6. The difficulties with which we are confronted are clear. Firstly it is certain that should another crisis arise during the summer months, the Czech General Staff will probably get sufficient half-correct information to warrant their again producing panic deductions. On the other hand we must guard against being too sure that we are not up against the real thing.

7. At first sight these difficulties appear to be great, but I do not myself believe that they are as serious as they seem. All the inaccurate information which we have received during the past few days about the alleged concentrations of German troops have come from Czech sources or from sources on which no great reliability could be placed. It is perfectly possible that we may be taken by surprise as to when and if the Germans *start* concentrating against Czechoslovakia. I believe, however, that once such concentration is in progress we shall get irrefutable and early evidence of the fact. We did not know that Germany intended to invade Austria on March 10, but as soon as troops started moving in earnest in any numbers we knew for certain and almost at once. When and if it is Czechoslovakia's turn, the operation of the German Army will be on a far larger scale and I venture to say much more deliberate.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE  
Colonel,  
*Military Attaché.*

No. 317

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 26, 3.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 200 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [C 4960/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 26, 1938

My United States colleague with whom I am keeping in touch told me yesterday that conversation and attitude of two members of German Legation here had given United States Military Attaché the clear impression that Legation had expected a *coup* over week-end and were suffering from a sense of frustration. They understood it would have meant war with England and for that Germany was not prepared.

Although I did not say so to United States Minister the above of course tallies with belief of Minister for Foreign Affairs that something in the form of an ultimatum was in preparation at German Legation last Saturday (see my telegram No. 171<sup>1</sup>).

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 288.

No. 318

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 26, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 237 Telegraphic [C 4980/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 26, 1938, 2.40 p.m.

Prague telegram No. 191<sup>1</sup> last sentence.

As I have reported in my telegram No. 230<sup>2</sup> I see no prospect of the German Government agreeing to recommend to Henlein to negotiate before troops called up last week have been released again.

I greatly doubt whether on tactical grounds either it would be politic for you to instruct me to do so [*sic*].<sup>3</sup> Last week public opinion claimed a British victory over Germany. A dictator's pride will not submit to a repetition of this and if our influence for what will probably be a still bigger crisis later as result of deadlock in negotiations between Henlein and Prague Government is to be turned to account, we must on this occasion prove that our influence at Prague has been successful.

In my opinion the best course would be to induce the Czechoslovak Government to agree to release troops immediately after next Sunday's election. If negotiations with Henlein then failed they could if needs be and however inconvenient be recalled before final elections a fortnight later.

Repeated Prague, Paris, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of May 25, Mr. Newton reported complaints by the Sudeten German paper 'Die Zeit' that 'the Czech press has given little prominence to the Henlein-Hodza interview and has preferred indeed to congratulate itself on the success of the calling up of reservists and the welcome which this measure is alleged to have received abroad'. There appears to be an accidental omission of a further reference, to Prague telegram No. 186 (Nos. 307-8), the last sentence of which contains the proposition under discussion.

<sup>2</sup> No. 313.

<sup>3</sup> See note 1 above.

No. 319

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 204 Telegraphic [C 4980/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1938, 10.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 237.<sup>1</sup>

We feel the force of your argument, though we also feel that condition is in itself unreasonable. We will support your suggestion in last paragraph at Prague and try to enlist French support.<sup>2</sup>

Above is at present for your own information only.

Repeated to Paris, Prague, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 318.

<sup>2</sup> A telegram (No. 123) in this sense was despatched to Mr. Newton at the same time as No. 319.

No. 320

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 121 Telegraphic [C 5008/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1938, 10.55 p.m.

I hope that the meeting with Herr Henlein on Saturday may be productive of good and early results. I have reason to fear that unless a really concrete basis for negotiation can be found on Saturday (*and no later*)<sup>1</sup> and unless speedy progress can then be made, Henlein will slip rapidly back into obstruction or rapidly forward into more extreme demands. At present our information is that there is still a good chance of his not going beyond his London desiderata. I earnestly trust that in any case no final or irrevocable attitude will be taken by either side.

I note that Herr Henlein will submit written proposals. One may assume that he may put forward demands more far-reaching than he would be content ultimately to accept. If there is any chance that he will confine himself to something fairly reasonable, there may be some value in having him committed to writing: it will be all the more difficult for him to bid up higher later.

I do not know whether there is any possibility of keeping the negotiations secret. Obviously it will be far harder for Herr Henlein to recede from any of his original demands once they become known to his followers.

Please speak in above sense to proper quarter.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> The words in brackets are underlined in the original.

No. 321

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 161 Telegraphic [C 4980/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1938, 10.55 p.m.

I understand from the French Embassy that instructions have now been sent to the French Minister in Prague strongly urging the Czechoslovak Government to revoke the military measures taken at the end of last week. Judging however by the very categorical language used by M. Hodza to Mr. Newton, as reported by the latter in his telegram No. 186,<sup>1</sup> it seems doubtful whether French representations hitherto made will be successful.

2. As you will see from my telegram No. 204<sup>2</sup> to Berlin, I think there is some force in the argument that German Government will find great difficulty in pressing Henlein unless he can get some satisfaction of his condition regarding military measures.

3. If French Government share this view we hope they will press Czechoslovak Government to adopt suggestion in last paragraph of Berlin telegram No. 237.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 307-8.

<sup>2</sup> No. 319.

<sup>3</sup> No. 318.



4. I shall be glad if you will put this suggestion to M. Bonnet and tell him that we are making it also to the Czechoslovak Government.

Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

### No. 322

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27)*

*No. 337 Saving: Telegraphic [C 4994/1941/18]*

PARIS, May 26, 1938

My telegram No. 150.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me last night that conversation between M. Daladier and German Ambassador had been of a very friendly nature.

M. Bonnet himself had a long talk with Count Welczeck last night just before dinner. He told Ambassador that he had not summoned him before as he feared press might pretend that he had done so in order to use language of a threatening nature. Now that things were quieter, he wished to impress upon Ambassador what a great opportunity Germany had of proving that her constantly reiterated desire for peace was sincere.

M. Bonnet had added that great pressure was being brought to bear upon Czechoslovak Government by France and Great Britain to go to extreme limit of reason, and conciliation, in their negotiations with Henlein, and it would be inconceivable if Germany preferred trying to get one hundred per cent of her desiderata by force, and plunging Europe into a war of which nobody could foretell the result, rather than content herself with say, seventy per cent, by peaceful negotiations.

M. Bonnet said that the Ambassador had seemed to agree, and anyhow promised to inform Berlin.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 286.

### No. 323

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27, 4.0 p.m.)*

*No. 239 Telegraphic [C 5063/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 27, 1938, 2.15 p.m.

#### PART I

I had a long and frank conversation with Baron von Neurath yesterday evening. I told him my grounds for anxiety were German impatience and the Czech delays. Nobody wanted war except German and Sudeten extremists on the one hand and Communists and other enemies of Germany on the other hand. Any of these who had all to gain might work up an incident of real gravity. Herr Hitler and France had spoken so often either of striking like lightning to save fellow Germans across the frontier from oppression or of being bound in honour to defend Czechoslovakia from aggression that circumstances might arise in which neither would be able to help themselves,

and Europe, which had all to lose, might slip into another general war as it did in 1914. In the event of such circumstances arising I said I counted on him more than on anyone else to use all his influence with Herr Hitler to save Europe from such disaster.

Baron von Neurath agreed with the above while observing that Herr Hitler in his personal capacity was less likely than the French nation to be dragged into war against his will. While admitting danger of Herr Hitler's periodic explosions of furious rage and probability that they would be fanned rather than damped down by Herr von Ribbentrop, he insisted on the Chancellor's ultimate sanity and fundamental desire to avoid war. Nevertheless he appreciated the dangers of crisis which might be produced in the event of sudden incident and deplored in this connexion the fact that election had been spread over such a long period in three stages instead of taking place simultaneously. I pointed out that since this could not now be helped it was important to get conversations between Henlein and Prague really going but he gave me no encouragement to hope that German Government [?] would recommend Henlein to negotiate so long as military measures continued.

#### No. 324

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27, 5.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 239 Telegraphic [C 5063/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 27, 1938, 2.18 p.m.

#### PART II

Following is continuation to my telegram No. 239.

Baron von Neurath told me he was convinced from information at his disposal that Czech War Office was largely under influence of Moscow and that a number of its staff officers were subsidised. He attributed to this source utterance of untrue stories of German concentrations. Russia, anticipating failure in Spain, was in his opinion now endeavouring to create new focus of trouble in Czechoslovakia. I told His Excellency that if this was true it was all the more essential that Germany should not help to play Bolshevik game and that my own information was that whatever may have been the position at the beginning the Czechoslovak Government was master of their own house.

While definitely reassuring as to Herr Hitler's desire for pacific solution Baron von Neurath was earnestly insistent on absolute necessity for His Majesty's Government, however ungrateful the rôle of an honest broker was, to continue to exercise the strongest pressure at Prague.

He told me that if Henlein had come to Germany for help it was not so much against Czechoslovak Government as against his own extremists. Henlein, and he knew him well, was himself reasonable and moderate. If Prague continued to hesitate or if the Czech concessions proved inadequate not only would Henlein be ousted as leader but a state of affairs would be created which would make risk of conflict a permanent one.

No. 325

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) and Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 207<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic [C 5009/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 27, 1938, 5.45 p.m.*

The following question was asked yesterday in the House of Commons:—

Mr. Noel-Baker—To ask the Prime Minister whether His Majesty's Government will propose the immediate despatch of an impartial frontier commission to the frontier between Germany and Czechoslovakia to investigate the alleged violations of the frontier and other incidents which may arise.

2. Answer. The hon. Member's suggestion is one which His Majesty's Government will bear in mind should it appear likely to be helpful.

<sup>1</sup> No. 207 to Berlin: No. 126 to Prague.

No. 326

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) and Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 208<sup>1</sup> Telegraphic [C 5009/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 27, 1938, 5.45 p.m.*

My telegram No. 207/126.<sup>2</sup>

2. I should be glad to know whether the German/Czech Government would welcome a proposal on our part that an international commission should be set up to be available for investigation of any incidents which might lead to trouble, whether by way of alleged violations of Czech and German territory by land or air or of internal disorder. It has been suggested that the presence of such a commission, enjoying goodwill of both Governments might have steadying effect. The commission would, of course, have access to and receive facilities in the territories of both countries.

3. I should also be glad to know whether the commission, if appointed, should include British or French members, or should preferably be limited to representatives of minor Powers, such as Sweden and Switzerland.

Please sound Government to which you are accredited, provided you see no objection.

Similar telegram has been addressed to Prague/Berlin.

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 208 to Berlin: No. 127 to Prague.

<sup>2</sup> No. 325.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27, 6.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 204 Telegraphic [C 5083/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 27, 1938, 1.35 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 220.<sup>1</sup>

I quite agree that now is the moment to make every effort to solve Sudeten question and that there must be no relaxation of efforts at Prague but if possible an intensification. I have as you know already spoken twice in that sense and will continue to exercise all possible pressure at every opportunity. My French colleague spoke on similar lines to the President of the Council again yesterday.

I fully realize too how extremely difficult and delicate is the task of influencing the German Government and my chief reason for submitting the following observations is in the hope that they may be helpful for that purpose.

Although I have no reason to suspect M. Benes of any intention to shuffle, the best way to make it impossible is to subject the declarations both public and confidential of the Czechoslovak Government forthwith to the test of serious negotiations at the conference table. This test is one which the Henlein party themselves have been evading.

Meanwhile German Government (have) brought their own good faith under grave suspicion by spreading unfounded, mischievous and cynical reports such as that: (1) M. Benes wants a show-down now. This is a German imputation on which a lurid light is thrown by second paragraph of Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 192<sup>2</sup> of May 18 giving warning from two different sources that Nazi extremists were themselves pressing for an immediate show-down.

(2) That the army is in control and that the President of the Council and the Minister of Interior were not consulted regarding military action taken when according to most authoritative and impartial sources the precise contrary is the case, and

(3) That M. Benes had not promised administrative autonomy in his speech of May 21 when the President of the Council had promised self-administration on May 20. (For detailed comments on these and other reports see my telegrams Nos. 181,<sup>3</sup> 184,<sup>4</sup> 185,<sup>5</sup> and my Savingram 162.<sup>6</sup>)

I suggest therefore that if moderates are in control and have any concern for reputation of the German Government and for avoiding exposure as criminal hypocrites they should try to give proof of their desire for a peaceful settlement by stopping the shufflings of the Sudeten German party.

The clear evidence of this shuffling to which I have drawn attention in my telegram No. 185 follows a long history of evasions and vague but apparently extravagant demands e.g. (see my letter to Sir O. Sargent, November 22,

<sup>1</sup> No. 297.

<sup>2</sup> No. 225.

<sup>3</sup> No. 302.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported parts of M. Benes' speech on May 23.

<sup>5</sup> No. 306.

<sup>6</sup> No. 304.

1937) culminating in speeches made at Carlsbad by Herr Henlein and other leaders. These latter demands were in themselves vague and far-reaching enough without the addition of prior conditions.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

No. 328

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 209 Telegraphic [C 5099/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 27, 1938, 5.35 p.m.

I regret that the message I sent to Herr Goebbels through the German Ambassador (see paragraph 3 of my despatch No. 836<sup>1</sup>) has not been followed by any modification in the press attacks against His Majesty's Government. On the contrary they seem to have increased in violence. While at a loss to understand the object of this campaign I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by my taking the matter up with the German Government. On the other hand, if you think that these attacks are honestly due, in part at any rate, to the fact that the German Government do not realise the extent of the efforts we have been making, and are continuing to make, in Prague, I am prepared that you should, if occasion arises, impress upon Herr von Ribbentrop that he is entirely mistaken in thinking that we and the (French) have not been bringing pressure to bear on the Czech Government. In the delicate situation in which we are placed it is obviously impossible for us to keep the German Government informed of everything we say or are told at Prague. If the Czech Government knew that all that was said to and by them was passed on to Berlin we would cease to be able to exercise any influence on the Czech Government. But I should have hoped that the German Government even so would have had confidence in the sincerity of His Majesty's Government, who have throughout made it clear that their only reason for intervening in this present dispute is the maintenance of peace and the establishment of an agreed settlement which would satisfy the reasonable claims of both Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 305.

No. 329

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 130 Telegraphic [C 4982/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 27, 1938, 6.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 166<sup>1</sup> to Paris.

In view of Paris telegram No. 160,<sup>2</sup> I fear that you may find it impossible

<sup>1</sup> No. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram (received at 6.20 p.m. on May 26) Sir E. Phipps reported



to induce the Czechoslovak Government to agree to release troops. If this proves to be the case, I should be glad if you would urge the Czechoslovak Government at least to make a gesture which will make it easier for Herr Henlein to co-operate, and agree to reduce the not inconsiderable number of men who have been called up for technical services. According to information supplied by your Military Attaché to the War Office these consist of 47,000 men in aircraft and security services, 24,000 men in the State defence guard, and specialists amounting to 25,000 men from classes other than those two from which the 80,000 reservists were called up. It would seem that certain of these categories could not normally be employed in preservation of order: their services would be of importance only in connexion with military operations.

You will understand that I regard this alternative as a last resort, and I should not like to give Czechoslovak Government chance of adopting it while there remains any chance of their agreeing to larger measure.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, Rome and Budapest.

that, according to M. Bonnet, the Czechoslovak Government had said that they could not demobilize 'even partially until after June 12' the classes recently called up, but that they were withdrawing troops 'from near the frontier'. They promised that no Czech aeroplanes would fly 'near the frontier even on the Czech side'.

#### No. 330

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 166 Telegraphic [C 4982/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 27, 1938, 7.00 p.m.*

My telegram No. 130<sup>1</sup> to Prague.

I observe from your telegram No. 160,<sup>2</sup> which crossed my telegram No. 161,<sup>3</sup> that the Czechoslovak Government have told the French Government that they cannot demobilize even partially until after June 12. While appreciating the reasons for this decision, I feel it important that Herr Henlein should, if possible, get some satisfaction regarding Czechoslovak military measures.

I should therefore be glad if you would convey to M. Bonnet the substance of my telegram to Prague No. 130, and urge him to send similar instructions to the French Minister.

Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Warsaw, Rome and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 329.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 329, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> No. 321.

#### No. 331

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Vereker (Moscow)*

*No. 67 Telegraphic [C 4917/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 27, 1938, 7.40 p.m.*

In reply to His Majesty's Minister's representations that the Czechoslovak Government should lose no time in coming to a settlement with the Sudeten

Germans, the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs told Mr. Newton on May 24 that he had impressed on his Government the foolishness of considering that the danger was over.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs then drew attention to an appeal which had been issued to the population to maintain calm and order. In addition, he said, the Party leaders had agreed to use their influence with their Parties to this end. A satisfactory feature had been the attitude of the Communists, who had been approached on May 23 by M. Bechyne, leader of the Czechoslovak Social-Democrat Party, and had promised to remain quiet and do nothing to provoke any disturbance.

Dr. Krofta thought that a hint from Moscow might be useful, and if you see no objection and can find a suitable opportunity I should be glad if you would draw the attention of M. Litvinov to the great importance of the avoidance of any incident which might give the German Government an excuse for trying to settle the Czechoslovak question by force and add that any advice he felt able to give in this sense would be valuable. This is particularly important in view of the gains by the Communist party in the local elections in Prague on Sunday last.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin and Prague.

#### No. 332

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28)*

*No. 205 Telegraphic [C 5077/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 27, 1938

Your telegram No. 119.<sup>1</sup>

French Minister made representations accordingly to the President of the Council on May 26 and an account which he gave me yesterday evening of his interview . . .<sup>2</sup> in Paris telegram No. 160.<sup>3</sup>

President of the Council's first reaction was that it would be impossible to demobilise until after June 12 for reasons given in my telegram No. 186.<sup>4</sup> He made also further point that if there were a demobilisation and it proved to be premature a renewal of military precautions might be considered to be specially provocative. On the matter being reverted to towards the end of the interview the President of the Council relented so far as to say that he was going to discuss with the Sudeten German leaders now the maintenance of order during the elections next Sunday and if discussions were satisfactory and elections passed off well he would consider whether it might be possible to disband some of the reservists.

President of the Council furthermore promised that Czech troops and in particular Czech aeroplanes would be withdrawn immediately from vicinity of the frontier (see my telegram No. 202).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 312.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. See No. 329, note 2.

<sup>4</sup> Nos. 307-8.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of May 26 Mr. Newton reported that, according to a semi-official communiqué, the German Minister had drawn the attention of the Ministry of

President of the Council had moreover already told Sudeten German leaders that if the presence of troops in any particular locality were felt to be objectionable and good reason given he would arrange for their removal.

During interview my French colleague drew emphatic attention to frequency and dangers of frontier incidents and also to the importance of nothing being done which would lend colour to German report that military were in control.

French Minister will return to the charge with the President of the Council to-day or to-morrow.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

Foreign Affairs to cases of aircraft crossing the German frontier. The Czech authorities were examining these cases, and had prohibited flying within five kilometres of the frontier.

### No. 333

*Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28, 4.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 111 Telegraphic [? by telephone] [C 5132/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, May 28, 1938

Your telegram No. 67.<sup>1</sup>

As I understand your telegram under reference it is your intention that I should suggest to M. Litvinov that a hint to remain quiet should be conveyed to Czech communist party through the Comintern. Before taking such action I feel bound to record [? my] opinion [? that] such a request would be very badly received by M. Litvinov who would probably reject it offhand as being of an improper character.

In the circumstances I will await further instructions before taking action on lines indicated in your telegram,<sup>2</sup> more especially as the French Ambassador, to whom I naturally said nothing about your telegram, tells me that he is convinced that Soviet Government, who are more concerned than any to avoid disturbance, have in fact already sent necessary instructions to Czech Communists whose attitude up to date seems to have been exemplary.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 331.

<sup>2</sup> On June 2 Mr. Vereker was instructed that no action need be taken. See also No. 342.

### No. 334

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28, 6.45 p.m.)*  
*No. 244 Telegraphic [C 5119/4786/18]*

BERLIN, May 28, 1938, 5.16 p.m.

Your telegram No. 130<sup>1</sup> to Prague.

I submit that of greater importance than release of technical troops not required for normal preservation of order would be definite withdrawal of all reserves from frontier districts into interior. It is this semi-mobilization on

<sup>1</sup> No. 329.

her frontier which is particularly irritating to German Government and State Secretary to whom I mentioned assurances of Czechoslovak Government reported in paragraph 3 of Prague telegram No. 205<sup>2</sup> of May 27, told me this morning that German information was that troops were still in force on the frontier and adding to unrest by interference with work of local inhabitants.

If Czechoslovak Government [? will not]<sup>3</sup> release troops forthwith would not normal sequence be (a) withdrawal of reserves, etc., to the interior, (b) their disbandment and (c) discussion with Henlein? Whether unreasonable or not fact is that German Government do not regard Henlein's refusal to negotiate before disbandment of reserves as new condition but rather consider calling up of those reserves as a new [? circumstance]<sup>3</sup> created by the Czechs. Moreover at the beginning of the crisis according to telegrams which I myself read from German Military Attaché at Prague, Czech Chief of Staff said a week ago that if reports of German military concentrations proved unfounded reserves would be again dismissed.

Repeated to Prague, Paris, Budapest, Rome and Warsaw.

<sup>2</sup> No. 332.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 335

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28, 6.0 p.m.)*

*No. 246 Telegraphic [C 5100/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 28, 1938, 4.9 p.m.

Your telegram No. 209.<sup>1</sup>

German press attacks on England have been principally due to three causes: (1) resentment at ready acceptance all over the world of theory that Germany concentrated troops with intention of attacking Czechoslovakia and was only restrained by energetic action of England, (2) the general jubilation at diplomatic defeat of Germany and rebuff to Herr Hitler, and (3) belief that firm British attitude and in particular insistence on probability of Great Britain being unable to stand aside in the event of conflict will have encouraged M. Benes to be recalcitrant.

I foresaw that attitude of press abroad might have exacerbating effect (see paragraph 2 of my telegram No. 204<sup>2</sup>). I realised that every effort has been made in London and I spoke to all the British correspondents here on May 22 with same end in view. Nevertheless there is no doubt that the newspapers in France (despite French Government) and many other countries have adopted an unfortunate line which has evoked this violent reaction here.

Rôle of honest [? broker] is an ungrateful one and as reported in my telegram No. 216<sup>3</sup> I do not take outburst of press too tragically provided we have some early tangible result of our efforts at Prague. German Government know we are making strong representations at Prague but they are judging sincerity and strength by results.

Meanwhile press campaign has momentarily ceased since it is thought it

<sup>1</sup> No. 328.

<sup>2</sup> No. 252.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

has fulfilled its double purpose of providing [? proving] that German moderation in face of Czech provocation has saved peace of Europe and of satisfying German public that Herr Hitler has not received a check. If attitude of Czechoslovak Government is, however, such as to encourage German suspicions . . .<sup>4</sup> point (3) above I have no doubt it will recommence.

I have again and again impressed on German authorities that our sole purpose in these delicate negotiations is to assist in securing a peaceful solution which will be satisfactory to all concerned in a very vexed question. All . . .<sup>4</sup> most extreme appreciation of this but until some definite result is achieved conviction will be lacking.

Repeated Paris and Prague.

<sup>4</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 336

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 214 Telegraphic [C 4959/1941/11]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 28, 1938, 5.30 p.m.*

While, as you will have seen from my telegram No. 123<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 130<sup>2</sup> I am pressing the Czechoslovak Government either to disband or to reduce the number of men they have called up I must say that I feel that in his telegram No. 162 Saving<sup>3</sup> Mr. Newton has made out a good case in justification of the military measures taken by the Czechoslovak Government.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> This reference appears to be to telegram 123 to Prague. See No. 319, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> This reference appears to be to telegram 130 to Prague (No. 329).

<sup>3</sup> No. 304.

### No. 337

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28, 9.25 p.m.)*

*No. 248 Telegraphic [C 5102/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *May 28, 1938, 7.12 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 208.<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch as I anticipated difficulty over such points as possible international character of the commission as well as access to German territory I thought it desirable to sound the State Secretary first rather than the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I explained position and told the former that we were putting forward the suggestion tentatively with the sole idea of endeavouring to be helpful and I took the opportunity to complain again of German press attitude as appearing to throw doubts on the sincerity of our efforts.

State Secretary told me that he would discuss question with the Minister for Foreign Affairs who would not be available before this evening and give me definite reply. Line which he took was much as I had foreseen, namely,

<sup>1</sup> No. 326.



that if there were a commission it should be purely British and that its activities should be confined to Czechoslovak territory and internal disorder, i.e. not frontier incidents, on the ground that since the German Government was not likely to agree to investigation by foreigners on their side of the frontier it would be impracticable to expect Czechs to agree to one-sided arrangement. I urged that at least if the Czechs violated German frontier, etc. the German Government might usefully *invite*<sup>2</sup> foreign inspection. State Secretary stuck however to his point and I expect reply will be more or less as stated above.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> This word is underlined in the original.

### No. 338

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 10.00 a.m.)*  
*No. 218 Telegraphic [C 5089/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 28, 1938, 9.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 121<sup>1</sup> and your telegram No. 123.<sup>2</sup>

As your telegram No. 125<sup>3</sup> which I had been warned by telephone to expect could not be decyphered in time I postponed an appointment with the President of the Council from yesterday evening to 9 a.m. this morning when it took place at his private house.

I told the President of the Council that I was glad to be his first visitor because I believed that the coming day was going to be one of critical and perhaps decisive importance. I had come to impress on him with all the earnestness at my command certain considerations on two questions.

The first question was that of negotiations with Herr Henlein. I had strong reason to believe that meeting which was I understood to take place between himself and Herr Henlein today might decide whether the situation would take a turn for the better or begin to go from bad to worse. Herr Henlein was probably in a position of great difficulty because his party in which the Radical elements were now very powerful and assertive refused to believe the Czechoslovak Government were sincere; however wrongly they had been strengthened in their disbelief by events of the last week-end. It was said that they had pointed out to Herr Henlein that his meeting with the President of the Council had led to no real result and they had complained that he had not even seen Nationalities Statute.

The President of the Council replied that he agreed as to the importance and critical nature of forthcoming meeting and was only too anxious to enter upon serious negotiations as he for his part had wished to do at his meeting with Herr Henlein the other day. On that occasion it was however Herr Henlein himself who had declared his inability to negotiate as long as military measures remained in force, thereby putting the cart before the horse. It was

<sup>1</sup> No. 320.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 319, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> See note at end of this chapter, p. 416.

moreover, unfair to say he had not seen Nationalities Statute. His Sudeten German visitors on that occasion had shown little curiosity on the subject, and when the President of the Council complained that they had rejected it in their speeches at Carlsbad before they had even seen it Herr Frank had lamely explained that it had been assumed first that the Statute contained nothing new and secondly that it would be put into force without their being consulted. The President of the Council explained that the Government had so far deliberately abstained from putting the Statute into final form precisely because they did not wish to complete it except in agreement with Sudeten German party. It would have been useless and indeed prejudicial at that meeting to have given the text to Herr Henlein as the party would of course at once have demanded something better, whatever it contained. He had however made it clear that it would be handed to them as soon as they were in a position to give him their demands.

I pointed out to the President of the Council that there might be some advantage in his receiving their claims in writing because today's maximum was liable to be tomorrow's minimum. The important point seemed to be that they should not be published except by mutual consent. He agreed.

I also mentioned the information which had reached me from German Legation that Herr Henlein would set up no prior conditions. The President of the Council had heard this also and said that he was anxious to start at once with serious negotiations beginning if possible with the question of self-administration. At the conclusion of this part of our conversation I stressed for the second time the great importance of achieving some definite concrete and if possible visible result of the meeting and said that I hoped that after the meeting some reassuring communiqué could be issued making this clear.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

### No. 339

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 11.15 a.m.)*

*No. 219 Telegraphic [C 5120/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, May 29, 1938, 7.5 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>2</sup>

I then took up the question of troop disbandment.

I explained to the President of the Council that I had fully reported to you objections to an immediate revocation of military measures which he had mentioned on May 24. Much had continued to happen since then and on a review of the whole position in its many aspects His Majesty's Government wished to urge Czechoslovak Government to disband these reservists as soon as possible after the elections next Sunday. French Government had, I knew, already expressed similar view.

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on May 28 but was despatched in reverse order with telegram No. 220 (No. 340).

<sup>2</sup> No. 338.

2. I did not wish to under-estimate success of measure taken but its fruits were likely to be very perishable. I represented to him that the Czechoslovak Government now stood before the alternatives of spoiling their success or of following up with a second much more constructive success if they would effect in a timely manner difficult and delicate operation of returning to normal. I went on to say that I had received report from well-informed and entirely impartial source by which I had been particularly impressed because it exactly corresponded with what he had himself told me on May 24. But it reported change had now set in and that situation if prolonged might become very dangerous. I then read him extracts from my telegram of today containing the very useful information supplied to me by His Majesty's Consul at Liberec.<sup>3</sup>

3. President of the Council did not dispute general accuracy of the latter part of this report but said with emphasis that a sudden liquidation of military measures could not be undertaken. A gradual liquidation would however begin next week in the course of which he could promise me that a substantial number of reservists, a few thousand, would be released. This information was confidential and as regards any public announcement way would probably have to be prepared by a preliminary *ballon d'essai*. Of course if there were serious incidents on Sunday the reduction might have to be postponed but he would not say to Henlein people that this was a condition for fear that some of their extreme adherents might deliberately perpetrate an incident in order to prevent appeasement. For today and tomorrow the soldiers would be confined to barracks. Moreover in order to avoid frontier incidents he had given instructions yesterday that any troops other than those in garrisons or normal posts should be withdrawn a certain distance. In reply to my enquiry he said this might be five kilometres or at certain places a good deal further.

4. I asked the President of the Council if he could not adopt suggestion put forward in Berlin telegram No. 237<sup>4</sup> but said that however it might be in theory, in practice once troops had been released it would be impossible to recall them without a risk of causing great provocation.

5. Finally Dr. Hodza mentioned to me that if I happened to be seeing my German colleague he would be glad if I would pass on to him, of course confidentially and personally, some of this information. This I accordingly did forthwith especially as regards impending reduction of troops and their withdrawal from the frontier. I also explained what Dr. Hodza had told me, that warning issued against approaching of the military too close—see my telegram No. 212<sup>5</sup>—was intended not as provocation, but, on the contrary, to prevent incidents. I took the opportunity to make it clear to the German

<sup>3</sup> This report described the Sudeten population as surprised by Czech efficiency and as at first complying with the instructions of the military authorities. 'This chastened mood' was, however, giving way to resentment at the continuance of abnormal measures. In Consul Pares's view these measures were no longer necessary to maintain order, and persistence in them might prove a serious obstacle to negotiations.

<sup>4</sup> No. 318.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. This telegram of May 28 reported that the population had been warned 'not to approach military objects or military guard posts with a view to preventing accidents'.

Minister that our great aims were to bring about a solution which would be (1) thorough and (2) peaceful. Our efforts were not being relaxed but, on the contrary, intensified and my impression was that the Czechoslovak Government equally appreciated the need for making every effort.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 340

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*No. 220 Telegraphic [C 5121/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, May 28, 1938, 9.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 219.<sup>1</sup>

General Staff informed Military Attaché this morning that by reason of receipt of satisfactory reports on military situation in Germany orders were about to be issued for the gradual thinning of screen of troops near the frontier. They would return, bit by bit, to their peace garrisons in the rear, provided internal and external situation remained normal. The reservists who had been called to the colours under Article 22, would finish their period of training of twenty-eight days before being disbanded. A few had been released already, but these were isolated cases allowed to return home for very special reasons.

In addition to above the area near the frontier which is barred to flight of Czech service aircraft had been increased in depth from five to ten kilometres.

Please inform the War Office and Air Ministry.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 339.

#### No. 341

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 5.40 p.m.)*  
*No. 226 Telegraphic [C 5122/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, May 29, 1938, 3.00 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 219 and 220.<sup>1</sup>

I took opportunity of my visit to Minister for Foreign Affairs<sup>2</sup> to mention briefly what I had said in the morning to the President of the Council on the subject of disbandment.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs' immediate reaction was that the internal

<sup>1</sup> Nos. 339 and 340.

<sup>2</sup> In an earlier telegram Mr. Newton reported that he had visited Dr. Krofta to sound him confidentially on the proposal made in No. 281. Dr. Krofta had given it as his own opinion that such investigation would be welcome 'subject to reservation that Germany had no right to intervene in internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, and that nothing should be done which would appear to recognize such a right'.

situation made any sudden revocation of military measures 'quite impossible'. I repeated very shortly some of the arguments previously used especially that of taking the earliest occasion to clinch and retain initial advantage gained. Minister for Foreign Affairs thereupon became more amenable to the idea of a beginning next week with release of at least some of the technical reservists. This was his own train of thought. I did not myself make suggestion. The decision will not lie with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. My mention of the matter was first for reasons of courtesy and secondly to prepare and influence his mind. Your telegram No. 130<sup>3</sup> reached me too late for my early interview with the President of the Council, but would not have affected result with which it is moreover in line.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>3</sup> No. 329.

#### No. 342

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 30, 3.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 232 Telegraphic [C 5147/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, May 30, 1938, 1.55 p.m.

Moscow telegram No. 111<sup>1</sup> to the Foreign Office.

I would point out that Dr. Krofta made no suggestion that Communists should be given a hint from Moscow, but merely stated as reported in my telegram No. 196<sup>2</sup> that 'He thought they might have had a hint from Moscow.' Possibly error occurred in transmission of sentence repeated above.

Repeated to Moscow, Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 333.

<sup>2</sup> No. 314.

#### No. 343

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 30, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 234 Telegraphic [C 5185/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, May 30, 1938, 5.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 214.<sup>1</sup>

From visits paid to Sudeten German area during the week end by Military Attaché and other members of my staff it is clear that bitterness of the population against military occupation is extreme. While it is impossible to verify the numerous accounts of individual provocation of which complaint is everywhere made (and vigorous denials that there has been any provocation on the German side are in themselves a warning against accepting the German

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of May 28 Mr. Newton reported (1) that a leading member of the Sudeten German party had visited the Legation and expressed indignation at the behaviour of the Czech troops and (2) that the military authorities had said they had issued orders against provocation.



complaints too literally) nevertheless the fact remains that indignation has reached a danger point. On every hand it is said that troops have occupied the country as if it were enemy territory.

There is ample evidence of the inconvenience caused to the population. Barricades have been put up over the roads throughout the area and great damage has been done for example to trees.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 344

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 221 Telegraphic [C 5100/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 30, 1938, 7.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 246.<sup>1</sup>

I appreciate the reasons as given in your telegram which have led the German propaganda ministry to launch their attacks on His Majesty's Government, but none of these reasons seem to me to justify these recent attacks, that is to say if we are to assume that the German Government really wish His Majesty's Government to continue their efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement. If they wished to prevent us from performing this ungrateful task, (which incidentally no other Government is in a position to perform) the best way of doing so would of course be by impugning the sincerity and honesty of His Majesty's Government, but I prefer not to think that this is really the intention of the German Government.

I hope you will find an opportunity of impressing on Herr von Ribbentrop the dangers to which Anglo-German relations will be exposed if press campaigns of this nature are launched against His Majesty's Government in circumstances which are bound to cause resentment in this country.

I see that you say that the German campaign has momentarily ceased, but I regret to observe that Herr Goebbels himself made yesterday a speech in which he criticised this country most unfairly.

As regards the three specific reasons for the German press attack, my only comment on (1) and (2) would be that it is surely shortsighted to allow momentary pique and disappointment to embitter Anglo-German relations, particularly at a moment when tension is severe. As for reason No. (3), it is fundamentally unsound and most mischievous. The fact that the Czechoslovak Government have not yet made concessions which the German Government consider necessary cannot be a reason for attacking His Majesty's Government, nor can it be argued that this has been due to the encouragement given by His Majesty's Government. The fact that it was necessary for this country to define its position, in the case of a general European war arising, as was done by the Prime Minister on March 24, in no way justifies assumption that we have given such encouragement. Indeed, far from allowing the Czechoslovak Government to draw encouragement from this state-

<sup>1</sup> No. 335.

ment of their position, His Majesty's Government have, as you know, consistently warned the Czechoslovak Government of the urgent necessity of their reaching an early settlement.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 345

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 141 Telegraphic [C 5120/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 30, 1938, 9.45 p.m.*

I observe from your telegram No. 219<sup>1</sup> that M. Hodza told you that unless there were serious incidents at Sunday's elections a liquidation of the military measures would begin this week in the course of which a substantial number of reservists would be released. Moreover, he had given instructions that any troops, other than those in garrisons or normal posts, should be withdrawn a certain distance from the frontier. From your telegram No. 220<sup>2</sup> I see that on May 28 the General Staff stated that orders were about to be issued for the gradual withdrawal of troops from the frontier to their peace garrisons in the rear. Again from your telegram No. 226<sup>3</sup> it appears that the Minister for Foreign Affairs was contemplating the release, this week, of some of the technical reservists. From Paris telegram No. 165<sup>4</sup> to me, I see that according to the French Minister, M. Hodza has already begun demobilisation. Finally I see from your telegram No. 217<sup>5</sup> that the arming of civilian organisations has now been called off.

In view of the fact that the elections appear to have passed off quietly yesterday I shall be glad if you will do anything you can to encourage the Czechoslovak Government to persevere in their plans for demobilisation and also for the withdrawal of troops from the frontier districts. (In this connexion please see Berlin telegram No. 244.)<sup>6</sup>

You might consider suggesting to the Czechoslovak Government that it would be in their own interest to announce publicly what measures they are able to take in connexion with the reduction and the withdrawal of troops. If however they feel unable to make this information public they might possibly feel disposed to authorise me to make it known to the German Government through His Majesty's Ambassador in the same manner as M. Hodza authorised you to pass on to your German colleague the information reported in your telegram No. 219.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 339.

<sup>2</sup> No. 340.

<sup>3</sup> No. 341.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed.

<sup>6</sup> No. 334.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)**No. 140 Telegraphic [C 5083/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 30, 1938, 11.00 p.m.*Your telegram No. 204.<sup>1</sup>

While I appreciate Czechoslovak Government's fears that the Henlein Party are trying to evade negotiations by continually raising fresh conditions, it must be remembered that the Czechoslovak mobilization measures, however justified they may have been, did bring about an alteration in the circumstances. This is one of the chief reasons why His Majesty's Government are pressing the Czechoslovak Government to modify those measures. Moreover, although the Czechs may have some reason to distrust the good faith of the German Government, you will appreciate that the latter also doubt the good faith of Dr. Benes. I fear that this doubt is not wholly unjustified, for whatever truth there may be in suggestion of recent 'shufflings' by the Henlein Party, there is no doubt that Dr. Benes has been very reluctant to move for the past two years.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 327.*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 172 Telegraphic [C 5211/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 30, 1938, 11.00 p.m.*

1. Although negotiations between the Czech Government and the Henlein Party appear now to have at last started in earnest, I think we shall be wise to be prepared for a possible breakdown in these negotiations. In such an event either party or both might appeal to His Majesty's Government and try to enlist their support against the other party. While we do not wish to be manoeuvred into the position of arbitrator, I realise that if such a deadlock does occur it may be of vital importance to resolve it without delay so as not to give the Sudetendeutschen, nor indeed the German Government, a pretext for arguing that negotiations having failed there is nothing left for them but to resort to direct action. I feel, therefore, that in such an eventuality the British and French Governments ought to be ready with immediate proposals for bringing the two parties together again,<sup>1</sup> with-

<sup>1</sup> On April 30 a suggestion was made in the Foreign Office (with reference to Captain Victor Cazalet's conversations while in Czechoslovakia: see No. 150, note 3) that it might be advisable to send privately to Prague an unofficial British intermediary who enjoyed the confidence of Dr. Hodza and Herr Henlein. Lord Halifax considered on May 8 (i) that 'the idea of a mediator' was worth keeping in mind, but (ii) that the point had not yet been reached at which any plan could be put forward, and (iii) that the mediator 'would not be an easy person to find'. It has not been possible to trace any other reference to this proposal in the Foreign Office archives between May 8 and May 30.

out if possible having to mediate themselves. For this purpose it occurs to me that the two Governments might at the appropriate moment propose to the Czechoslovak Government [that] an international commission should investigate the cause of the deadlock and devise means for overcoming it.

2. It would probably be found necessary for the Commission to consist of British or French representatives as well as representatives of minor Powers, in order to give it an international character, though I should not at all wish to insist on inclusion of a British member. But if it is to be effective it ought to be strictly limited in numbers and above all to be presided over by a strong chairman, with special qualifications for the delicate task with which the Commission would be entrusted. (This Commission would, of course, be quite distinct from the Commission which has been suggested in my telegrams to Berlin No. 208<sup>2</sup> and to Prague No. 127<sup>2</sup> for the investigation of frontier incidents.)

3. I shall be glad if you will take an early opportunity of discussing this idea with M. Bonnet.

4. We are considering lines of broader action which in certain circumstances might be desirable, in regard to which we shall hope to communicate with French Government shortly.<sup>3</sup>

Addressed to Paris, repeated to Berlin No. 223 and Prague No. 137.

<sup>2</sup> No. 326.

<sup>3</sup> Sir E. Phipps replied on May 31 that he had discussed this telegram with M. Bonnet. M. Bonnet was in general agreement with the views of His Majesty's Government and promised to let Sir E. Phipps have 'his considered views shortly'.

#### No. 348

*Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3, 1938)*

*No. 31 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5360/1941/18]*

MOSCOW, May 30, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 197.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador asked to see me on his return from Paris to explain that the words '*quasi casus belli*' (according to the information which he had received at the time from Paris) had been used by Herr Woermann and not by His Majesty's Ambassador. He desired to express his personal regret for any misunderstanding which might have arisen.

I then read out the relevant sentence in my despatch No. 248<sup>2</sup> to His Excellency and said that his explanation conflicted with both Colonel Firebrace's and my own perfectly clear recollection of his statement which I had moreover particularly requested him to repeat to us a second time so as to avoid any possible equivocation. I would however make a careful note of his explanation.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 222, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> No. 222.

NOTES BY MR. STRANG<sup>1</sup> ON CONVERSATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF HIS MAJESTY'S  
LEGATION AT PRAGUE, MAY 26-7, 1938

Plebiscite

1. During a talk with His Majesty's Minister on the evening of my arrival in Prague on the 26th May, I developed the suggestion which the Secretary of State had instructed me to put to him on the subject of a plebiscite.

2. I said that the Secretary of State had been turning this question over in his mind and was inclined to think that Dr. Benes, if a plebiscite was likely to become a live issue, would be wiser to offer the Sudeten Germans a plebiscite now than to have to grant it later on under threat of force.

3. As the Secretary of State saw the question, we had turned the first corner, but the main problem still awaited solution. Suppose the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans were to break down and there were further incidents, what would be the next step? We did not want to get into the position of endorsing Dr. Benes' plan (however good it might be) and then having to run away from it because the Germans rejected it and became violent again. If Dr. Benes offered what he thought a good plan and Herr Henlein rejected it, there would be a confused and possibly a dangerous situation.

4. In these circumstances the best standing ground for Dr. Benes and for ourselves might be the early offer of a plebiscite. Such a plebiscite might take place immediately, or after a given period of years; the Secretary of State thought an immediate plebiscite preferable, since with a deferred plebiscite the parties would be manœuvring for position during the whole interim period. Thus, Dr. Benes might offer what he regarded as a maximum plan of concessions, and if this plan were refused, he might offer a plebiscite on the two questions:—

- (1) acceptance of the plan;
- (2) union with Germany.

5. The argument to use with Dr. Benes would be that we had missed trouble on this occasion, perhaps by a small margin. Neither Czechoslovakia, nor France, nor Great Britain, were on a good wicket if there was trouble. Dr. Benes' best chance of preserving an independent Czech State would be along the lines of (1) a plebiscite, (2) neutrality (I said the Foreign Office were studying both these questions). Dr. Benes would no doubt ask what guarantees he would receive either (1) for the rump, in the event of a plebiscite favourable to Germany, or (2) for the integral State, in the event of a plebiscite unfavourable to Germany. The answer must be that no such guarantees can be offered, so far as we are concerned. All that could be said would be that Czechoslovakia would have a better chance of survival as a neutralised State after a plebiscite than at present, since the so-called provocative elements in her situation and policy would have been removed.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Strang was instructed to visit H.M. Missions at Berlin and Prague in order to hold the conversation summarised above and in No. 350.



6. There were, of course, the obvious difficulties about a plebiscite; how to frame the questions; how to delimit the polling area; how to ensure a free vote—e.g., foreign troops. There was also the question whether the German Government would want a free plebiscite—they liked to run their own plebiscites. But these could be left aside for the moment. The question to consider was whether we should advise Dr. Benes to accompany his final offer with the offer of a plebiscite. The Sudeten Germans would always be a troublesome element and it might be better to have them (or the bulk of them) outside the State than inside it.

7. The Secretary of State would see no harm if Mr. Newton thought fit to explore this suggestion in Prague on a purely personal basis. Meanwhile, the Secretary of State was considering whether to broach it with the French Ambassador and the Czechoslovak Minister.

8. Mr. Newton said that it would be difficult for him to broach this question on a purely personal basis. The dividing line between the personal and the official had now become almost non-existent, and if he mentioned the question at all it would certainly be assumed that he was speaking with official authority. He would prefer to wait a bit until we could instruct him further. He had hitherto avoided this subject altogether.

9. He recalled that he had recently made some observations that were material to this question in his despatch No. 157<sup>2</sup> of the 16th May.

10. There were two main problems facing us: (1) the Sudeten German question, (2) the question of Czechoslovakia's foreign relations. It was important to remember that, even if there were not a single German in Czechoslovakia, the root problem of German-Czech relations would still remain, viz., a Slav State thrust into the heart of Germany, and having treaties of mutual assistance with powerful States East and West. On the other hand, if the problem of Czechoslovakia's foreign relations could be satisfactorily solved from Germany's point of view, the sting would be taken out of the Sudeten German question. The German Government were not moved by racial considerations alone—indeed, the Reich Germans rather despise the Sudeten Germans as inferior members of the race. They are using the Sudeten German question as an instrument of policy, to strengthen their political and military position. They want in the first place to expel the Soviet Union from Central Europe, and, indeed, to deny the use of Czechoslovak territory to any other great Power. At the back of their minds—though this is never talked about—must be the fact that, as the map will show, the direct road from Berlin to Vienna lies through Prague, and the way from Silesia to Austria lies across the narrow neck of Czechoslovakia.

11. This, Mr. Newton thought, had a bearing on the question of a plebiscite. He was doubtful whether the Reich really wanted to incorporate the German fringe of Bohemia and Moravia within itself. The German Government might well prefer to leave the Sudeten Germans where they were and to exercise predominant political and economic influence over Bohemia and

<sup>2</sup> No. 221.

Moravia, which would become a kind of vassal State. This was the importance, from Germany's point of view, of severing Czechoslovakia's special relations with Soviet Russia and France. The German Government might even be opposed to the dismemberment of Slovakia for the benefit of Poland and Hungary, since if Czechoslovakia remained intact under German influence, Slovakia would provide a corridor for Germany eastwards towards Roumania, which would be blocked if Poland and Hungary annexed it between them.

12. If there were a plebiscite, where was the frontier to be drawn? What was to be done with the numerous Czech population in the German area, and the numerous German population in the rest of Bohemia and Moravia?

13. It was possible that the Sudeten German question was really a side-show and that, as would appear from 'Mein Kampf', the real thrust of German territorial expansion lay eastwards. Germany might perhaps be satisfied (1) if the Sudeten Germans enjoyed self-administration, including the profession and practice of Nazi principles, (2) if Czechoslovakia's foreign relations could be regulated in the direction of neutralization. If this result could be achieved, the Reich Germans might take less interest in the Sudeten Germans (whom they regard as rather poor specimens) and tell them to be quiet. It might well be that Germany was aiming at establishing political and economic influence over the territories of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire rather than at dismembering or disrupting them.

14. In any event, it was, he thought, true to say that the Sudeten Germans thought and felt themselves to some extent to be Bohemian. There was much to be said for leaving the economic unit of Bohemia and Moravia intact, provided that Czechoslovakia's foreign commitments could be abrogated.

15. There might well be an element of bluff in Herr Henlein's threat to ask for a plebiscite; and to that extent there might be some point—at a suitable moment—in calling the bluff by offering a plebiscite. What was pretty clear, however, whatever Herr Henlein's own views might be, was that the rank and file of the Sudeten population, who were still exhilarated by the 'Anschluss', wanted to join up with the Reich, and a plebiscite would go overwhelmingly in favour of incorporation.

16. It was very doubtful, of course, whether the Sudeten Germans could become loyal and contented citizens of Czechoslovakia. But Mr. Newton thinks the experiment is worth trying. If it were in the interests of the Reich Government that the Sudeten Germans should behave themselves, and if their own economic interests should work in the same direction, the situation might settle down and in time might stabilise itself. Time might do a good deal to solve this question.

17. The Czechs themselves would probably prefer (1) self-administration for the Sudeten Germans, together with (2) neutralisation of the Czechoslovak State, to a plebiscite with dismemberment. The Czechs have very strong feelings for the Czech population in the German districts on the frontier, and regard them as the pioneers or vanguard of the Czech idea on the racial frontier between German and Slav. The General Staff would also,

according to the Military Attaché, be strongly opposed to dismemberment. Not only would they be giving up a good military frontier, on the fortification of which immense sums have been spent, but they have the sense of domination and wish to keep the German population within the State. The Czechs would also regard with horror any exchange of population between the German and Czech areas; this is one of the difficulties, since the populations are so mixed that no plebiscite could give a clear-cut territorial result. Mr. Newton is inclined to think, therefore, that it would be better to avoid this kind of surgical operation if possible and to aim at the maintenance of the mixed State, even though it would fall within the German economic and political orbit.

18. There are, of course, people who think that the Czechs would fight rather than agree either to a plebiscite or to concessions in the internal and external sphere tantamount to vassalage, though I do not remember that Mr. Newton or any of his staff committed themselves to an opinion on this point. But concessions of this nature would almost certainly bring about changes of Government in Czechoslovakia and much internal disturbance, including perhaps the resignation of the President himself.

19. Mr. Newton suggested, finally, that the feasibility of a plebiscite might be one of the matters referred for report to the British investigator, if one were despatched by His Majesty's Government.

#### APPOINTMENT OF AN OBSERVER OR OF A COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION OR ENQUIRY

20. I had a discussion on this subject with His Majesty's Minister on the morning of the 27th May, in the course of which the following possible alternative courses were examined. The Military Attaché (Colonel Stronge) and Mr. Troutbeck, First Secretary of the Legation, were present.

##### I.

21. The simplest plan would be for His Majesty's Government to appoint an investigator (who might be accompanied by secretarial staff), whose first duty would be to tour the Sudeten country and submit to His Majesty's Government a first-hand review of the existing situation as a special supplement to the reports from His Majesty's Minister and His Majesty's Consul at Liberec. He might be assisted in his enquiries by His Majesty's Consul at Liberec. It would be open to the investigator to submit any suggestions for a solution that might occur to him, and he could report on the feasibility of any proposal that might be referred to him by His Majesty's Government.

22. His second duty would be, with the assistance of His Majesty's Consul at Liberec, and, if need be, of the Military Attaché, to enquire into and report on any incidents affecting the German population that might occur during his stay in the country.

23. His Majesty's Minister thinks it quite possible that the Czechoslovak Government would welcome such an appointment. They have a good

conscience so far as the occurrence of incidents is concerned, and an impartial enquiry would in any event serve as a corrective to German propaganda. They would not be sorry to see us interesting ourselves to this increased extent in the Sudeten problem, since they would feel that we were thereby committing ourselves more definitely in the business, and this—after the line we took in Berlin during the crisis of last week-end—would, in their view, be all to the good. They might also think that if the investigator made any proposals for a solution, these would in all probability be less extreme than the maximum demands of the Henlein Party.

24. His Majesty's Minister thinks that this proposal is worth consideration. In the present situation it is possible that there is advantage in doing something rather than doing nothing, particularly if the particular form of activity meets with the approval of both sides. He quite realises that if we appoint an investigator we shall be committing ourselves more directly than before; but he feels that this is inevitable in any case (only to-day, for example, we have for the first time approached the Czechoslovak Government as regards the disbandment of the extra effectives called up last week-end, a duty we have hitherto left to the French), and that if we are to intervene more directly in the future than in the past, it is desirable that we should be as well informed as possible. There is the further point that if the effort to start negotiations between the Sudeten Germans and the Government should fail, or if once started they should break down, His Majesty's Government would be in a better position to play the honest broker if they had first-hand and up-to-date information in their possession. The person chosen should, of course, know German well, and should be of a sceptical turn of mind and proof against propaganda. A senior and experienced Consular officer who has not served in either Germany or Czechoslovakia might fill the bill.

25. Colonel Stronge suggests that in the event of an incident involving Czechoslovak troops, he himself should be deputed to investigate the incident, if he has time to do so. He would in that event, he says, necessarily be accompanied by a Czechoslovak Staff officer.

26. Mr. Newton will not sound the Czechoslovak Government about this pending further instructions. It will be desirable to sound the French Government before he does so.

27. This proposal has the advantage that it could be put into effect fairly quickly; and could be adopted as a preliminary measure in advance of the alternative courses examined below.

## II.

28. Another possibility is that His Majesty's Government should appoint a commission of enquiry composed either of British subjects or of 'neutrals' or of both, with the definite instruction to propose a solution of the Sudeten German question and to prepare a plan after investigation on the spot, as well as to investigate any incidents that might occur during its stay in the country.

29. We could either (a) have this proposal ready up our sleeve for use in

the event of a deadlock between the Sudeten Germans and the Czechoslovak Government, with the threat of further incidents; or (b) let it be known at once that we should propose some such plan if the negotiations should break down.

30. This second plan is, of course, a much more serious matter than the first, and is in the nature of an arbitration.

31. It would, however, be in keeping with the leading part we have played in this question since the beginning, and we might well argue that we cannot form a judgment on the issues involved unless there is a special investigation on the spot.

32. It is open to a number of objections.

33. It involves us very deeply in the affair; yet it may be that no solution will be found unless we can exercise our influence to the utmost. One of its effects might be to stiffen the attitude of the Czechs *vis-à-vis* the Sudeten Germans in the current negotiations, since they might reasonably calculate that a neutral commission would recommend a solution more favourable to themselves than they are likely to get face to face with the Sudeten Germans with the strength of the Reich behind them. Finally, this proposal could hardly commend itself to the German Government, who regard the Sudeten German question as one to be settled by Henlein (which means the German Government) and the Czechoslovak Government direct, and as one which they regard as their own affair and no concern of outsiders—except in so far as outsiders can persuade the Czechs to give the Germans what they want. The German Government will, no doubt, think that the Sudeten Germans (with their help) can get better terms for themselves than would be offered to them by a neutral commission.

### III.

34. A third alternative would be a Commission appointed jointly by His Majesty's Government and the German Government, for the same purpose as the Commission in II, with terms of reference agreed upon by the two Governments.

35. His Majesty's Minister thinks that the Czechoslovak Government might well accept this proposal, since they will pay attention to almost any advice we offer them in present circumstances.

36. As for the German Government, they might, as suggested above, regard this plan also as an unwarranted interference on our part. On the other hand, they might feel that they would by this means secure a large concession with our blessing and as a result of Anglo-German collaboration, without prejudice to their securing further concessions by their own methods within a short period thereafter. The first step taken in concert with us would make the subsequent steps easier to take.

### IV.

37. Finally, if it is clear that no accommodation between the Sudeten Germans and the Government is possible, there may be a case for calling an



international conference on Czechoslovakia, attended by the Powers chiefly concerned, with a view to the despatch of an international commission, under the auspices of the conference, to recommend a solution. The German Government, again, would be unlikely to assent, and if they did not, the Italian Government would probably take the same line. But the proposal, even if rejected, might have a restraining influence; and if accepted, might bring about a solution.

## V.

38. There remains the proposal—different in character from those outlined above—made by Mr. Noel Baker in his question in the House of Commons on the 26th May, namely, for an international commission to visit the German-Czechoslovak frontier in order to investigate violations of that frontier.

39. These, of course, unlike those referred to in preceding sections, would be international incidents and not internal incidents like those affecting the Sudeten German population.

40. It would be difficult to investigate such incidents on the Czechoslovak side of the frontier alone—and the German Government would be unlikely to admit the Commission on to German territory.

41. In any event, such incidents have not so far proved to be very dangerous, though they might easily become so. One form of violation which—if it occurs on a substantial scale—might cause trouble is the penetration of aircraft across the frontier for purposes of reconnaissance.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### (a) *The Czech Attitude.*

42. It does not appear that the passing of the immediate crisis has lessened the realisation on the Czech side that something drastic must be done. Responsible Ministers like MM. Hodza and Krofta are, Mr. Newton thinks, no less convinced of this than before. Indeed, the crisis—which involved military measures on the part of Czechoslovakia—has brought a keener sense of the seriousness of the position. Czechoslovakia is at last face to face with a crisis in her fate.

43. It was obvious that both among the people at large and in governing circles the action we took in Berlin last week-end should have acquired the highest significance. The fact that we acted at all, and at this precise moment, has made a deep impression. We are, naturally, regarded as having committed ourselves, morally at any rate, to intervene if there is a European war, and nothing that we are likely to say will remove that impression. Though the words we may have used were the same as those of the Prime Minister's speech of the 24th March, a much deeper impression has been made in Europe at large by Sir N. Henderson's *démarche* than by the speech itself.

44. The news was passed round very quickly. The Italian Minister in Prague knew the same day substantially what Sir N. Henderson had said to Herr von Ribbentrop. It is impossible to keep these things secret, and this

led Mr. Newton to observe to me that there are limits to the extent to which we can go in saying one thing in Prague and another in Berlin.

45. The warning we gave in Berlin has had one good effect, among others, in Prague. It has greatly increased our influence. Since we have (in Czech eyes) been better than our word, the Czechoslovak Government will be more inclined to trust us and to take our advice in future. The same, of course, is true of Paris. If we had not spoken as we did in Berlin, it would have been more difficult for the French Government to speak as strongly as they did in Prague.

46. Mr. Newton strongly repudiates the suggestion that Dr. Benes would rather have a war than make generous concessions. He regards this kind of talk as irresponsible and malicious. He thinks that our representations have had a very great effect on Dr. Benes and the two Ministers to whom they were made. Our words have carried greater weight both in Prague and in Berlin than those of the French, and our position has been strengthened in Prague by what we did in Berlin.

*(b) Further British Action.*

47. Mr. Newton takes the view that in the present situation it is better for us to go on doing something than to do nothing. If we try first one thing, then another, some solution may emerge. He is the more inclined to take this view since the events of last week-end. Whatever we intended, we are certainly regarded as being now much more deeply committed in the Czech affair than before. That being so, he thinks we might make the most of the position which this confers on us. It seemed to him that we could now hardly avoid having to give more definite advice to the Czechoslovak Government than we have hitherto done both as regards internal affairs and as regards Czechoslovakia's foreign relations. As to the first we had so far used general terms only, and the second we had not mentioned at all. This impression was later confirmed (1) by the receipt of the Secretary of State's record of his conversation with the Czechoslovak Minister on the 25th May, in which he spoke for the first time of autonomy on the Swiss model, and raised the question of neutrality; (2) by the receipt by Mr. Newton of instructions to urge for the first time upon the Czechoslovak Government the countermanding of some of their military measures.

48. It is for the same reason that Mr. Newton would, on the whole, be in favour of our despatching an observer or investigator or a commission of enquiry to Czechoslovakia. Activity, undertaken with the assent of all concerned, can hardly do much harm, and may do good.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Newton was subsequently informed (by telegram No. 148 of June 2) that of these various suggestions (i) it was not intended at the moment to pursue the plan to send observers to study the problem on the spot and make recommendations to H.M.G. for a solution; (ii) the proposal for appointing a commission to mediate in the event of a breakdown of negotiations was being pursued with the French Government (see No. 347); (iii) a commission to investigate frontier incidents was impracticable, given the attitude of the German Government (see Nos. 337 and 352), but that (iv) observers sent to the Sudeten districts to investigate incidents, establish the facts and report on them to H.M.G.

(c) *The German Attitude.*

49. Mr. Newton thinks that the German press campaign against us was due to the realization that it was our attitude and action that prevented a German move last week-end, and arose from resentment thereat.

50. According to a member of the Legation at Prague, the German Legation regard the events of last week-end as a master-stroke by Dr. Benes. He has (1) placed Germany on the defensive before the world as the aggressor foiled; (2) he has strengthened the position of the Government in the country at large, and particularly in the Sudeten areas; (3) he has brought His Majesty's Government to commit themselves.

(d) *Military Situation.*

51. The view taken by Colonel Stronge, Military Attaché at Prague, is as follows:—

52. The Czechoslovak General Staff profess to have information about the German plan of campaign so far as it concerns Czechoslovakia. By this plan concentration would be effected gradually, under guise of moves for training purposes. The Czechoslovak General Staff interpreted the recent German troop movements in this sense, and exaggerated them for their own purposes. Czechoslovakia cannot afford to be taken by surprise. It was therefore essential in the national interest to make counter-preparations. Such reaction was inevitable, and Colonel Stronge is convinced that the General Staff will always react in this way every time such movements on the German side are perceived. Czechoslovakia's chief danger is that of being immediately overwhelmed by a surprise attack in force, and she can leave nothing to chance.

'might serve usefully to preserve peace by calming local agitation, by dispelling rumours regarding the misbehaviour of Czech officials and troops if these are unfounded, and by checking such misbehaviour if they are not. It might also serve to show the German Government that H.M.G. are sincerely anxious to contribute to the improvement of the atmosphere and the peaceful solution of the question.' The proposed observers should be British and two would suffice; they could be provided by appointing an assistant military attaché at Prague and using the services of H.M. Consul at Liberec. As it appeared from Dr. Krofta's views (see No. 341, note 2) and from Mr. Strang's conversation with Mr. Newton that the Czechoslovak Government might welcome such a project, Mr. Newton was instructed to enquire whether they would agree to the appointment of these observers. On June 4 (telegram No. 180 Saving) Mr. Newton reported that he had enquired of President Benes who saw no objection in principle 'as Czechoslovakia had nothing to hide', but wished certain points to be considered: (i) that in deference to Czech public opinion no public announcement should be made, (ii) that care be taken to avoid the impression that the observers would exercise any sort of control as against the Czechoslovak Government and that, partly for this reason, they should also investigate the extent of Sudeten German responsibilities for incidents, and (iii) that before an investigation was undertaken the Czechoslovak Government would probably wish to be consulted. For these reasons Dr. Benes felt unable to give an immediate reply. On June 8 (telegram No. 272) Mr. Newton reported that he had been officially informed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Czechoslovak Government would welcome the appointment of such observers. On June 8 (telegram No. 156) Mr. Newton was instructed to express to the Czechoslovak Government the appreciation of H.M.G. of their readiness to welcome these observers and to inform them that Major R. Sutton Pratt had been appointed Assistant Military Attaché to H.M. Legation at Prague for this purpose and would act with Mr. Pares.

A year hence she will be in an 80 per cent. better position to resist such an attack. This, in Colonel Stronge's view, disposes of any suspicion that the more responsible elements in the country—which include the General Staff—would think that it would be better to have a war now than later.

53. Colonel Stronge is not himself convinced that the Germans intended any military action against Czechoslovakia, though he admits that there was some kind of movement. At the same time, he feels that the Czechs had some justification for acting as they did for the reasons given above, and in the light of the Austrian precedent, though they exaggerated the extent of the German movements.

54. Internally, the calling up of one class has done nothing but good. It has given the General Staff some useful experience. It has shown the country that the Government can govern. And it has made the life of the Czech officials in the German areas tolerable again.

55. Recent travellers say that on the German side there is not a man to be seen, while on the Czech side barricades have been erected, trees have been felled and there are soldiers in position.

56. Colonel Stronge explained that the view he expressed as to German intentions was a personal one, which he did not think was fully shared by the Minister and other members of the Legation.

57. Mr. Newton touched on this point during a talk I had with him on the evening of my arrival on the 26th May.

58. His view was that the Germans probably did intend to move against Czechoslovakia last week-end, not necessarily by way of a full-dress attack, but more probably by way of incursions by S.A. and S.S., supported by a limited military concentration on the frontier.

59. He thought that they had been deterred (1) by our warning in Berlin, particularly by the Secretary of State's personal message; (2) by the Czechoslovak military reaction. The measures taken by the Czechoslovak Government were, in Mr. Newton's opinion, justified. They were adequate to nip in the bud any serious local disturbance or to counter any limited incursion from across the frontier. They made it quite clear for the future that, if Germany wishes to act against Czechoslovakia, it must be by way of deliberate attack in force, and not by way of incursion.

H.M. EMBASSY, BERLIN

*May 29, 1938*

## No. 350

NOTES BY MR. STRANG ON CONVERSATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF HIS MAJESTY'S  
EMBASSY AT BERLIN: MAY 28-9, 1938

*The Crisis of May 21-2.*

The following outline of the position, which must, of course, be speculative, is drawn from conversations with His Majesty's Ambassador, the Military Attaché, and Mr. Kirkpatrick, First Secretary at the Embassy.

2. The necessary progressive psychological preparations had been made in the Nazi press for action against Czechoslovakia, and by the end of last week the train was laid and the stage set. Had the train been fired on Saturday or Sunday, the public would have been ready for it. In the light of past experience it was a reasonable assumption from the terms used by the press that some move against Czechoslovakia was imminent.

3. Whether or not, in fact, any act was intended, it is impossible to say. A decision on these matters rests with one man alone. On this occasion Herr Hitler did not act. What his intentions may have been cannot be known.

4. There is little doubt that, had there been a 'blood-bath' in Czechoslovakia, he would have acted, and that the army would have wholeheartedly obeyed his order.

5. There is equally little doubt that the army is not ready for a European war, and that advice to this effect is consistently given to Herr Hitler by the leaders of the army. On the other hand, he is no doubt advised by Party hot-heads that, in spite of this, the risk is worth taking and that he would get away with his *coup* once again. It is probable that had Herr Hitler thought he could have occupied the Sudeten areas without provoking a European war, he would have done so last week-end.

6. The military preparation was not on a scale commensurate with the psychological preparation. The Military Attaché and his assistant visited the areas where preparations against Czechoslovakia would naturally be visible, and saw nothing to suggest that any move in force against Czechoslovakia was in contemplation. The Military Attaché is not prepared to say that no such preparations were made. He would think it likely that certain precautionary steps were taken, but he does not believe that such moves as were in progress were in the nature of a concentration. There were undoubtedly moves taking place, but these might reasonably be held to be of a routine nature. It is not out of the question to suggest that the Czechoslovak Military Intelligence Department, which was naturally in a jumpy state, may have been deliberately led by the German military authorities to think that some move was on foot. This may have been designed as a demonstration or a warning, to encourage the Sudeten electors or to deter the Czechoslovak authorities from provoking incidents.

7. In the event, the German military authorities gained valuable information from the crisis. They discovered what would be the character of the Czechoslovak counter-dispositions; and they learned what would be the probable attitude of the French, British and perhaps Polish Governments in case of war. They now know what to expect.

8. The Military Attaché does not think that in present circumstances the General Staff would consider that the mounting of a surprise attack upon Czechoslovakia would offer sufficient advantages to outweigh the disadvantages of delivering what would necessarily be, in such circumstances, an inadequately prepared blow. They would not wish to undertake this operation without at least partial mobilization. This could not be concealed, and the necessary preparations would take several days. The Czechoslovak



Government would therefore have a few days' notice, so far as serious military operations are concerned, though there might be heavy air attacks and minor military incursions delivered without warning. (I gather from the United States Ambassador at Berlin that this view is not shared by his Military Attaché, who thinks that Germany can deliver a considerable attack without prior mobilization.)

9. This does not, of course, exclude the two possibilities (i) that Herr Hitler might order immediate military action at whatever risk in case of a serious incident in Czechoslovakia; (ii) that at some later date, the General Staff may judge that the will and power of the Czechoslovak army to resist has become so weak that the German army could secure its immediate territorial objectives in the Sudeten country with light forces, and without serious military operation, in conditions which would make French (and therefore British) intervention unlikely.

10. It follows from what has been said above that in the view of the Embassy it would not be accurate to suggest (as has been done in some quarters) that there was a deliberate intention on the part of Germany to attack Czechoslovakia in force; that the preparations for such an attack were set on foot; and that the intention was foiled and the preparations suspended in consequence of the reaction of foreign Governments, including, in particular, the warning given by His Majesty's Government on the 21st May. The truth would more probably be that some stern message to Czechoslovakia, amounting perhaps to an ultimatum, was in contemplation after the shooting of the two Sudeten Germans at Eger on the morning of the 21st May; and that the German Government decided not to proceed with this plan when they saw that it would not improbably lead to a European war, for which they were not ready. Herr Hitler would naturally therefore suffer from a sense of frustration in that Germany's liberty of action in Central Europe on a matter affecting a German population has, owing to the present incompleteness of Germany's military preparedness, been curtailed by action from abroad. This feeling would be the more bitter in that two Sudeten Germans lost their lives, and he did nothing about it. He would also suffer from a sense of exasperation in that the world as a whole has maliciously attributed to Germany certain grossly aggressive intentions which, it is said, have been foiled, but for which, in Germany's view, there would, on any honest contemplation of the facts, be no warrant whatever.

11. It is His Majesty's Government, above all, who are the target for German resentment, since we are regarded as having played the chief part in frustrating Germany. It is all the more necessary, therefore, in Sir N. Henderson's view, that we should make a renewed effort at Prague in order to be able to show Berlin that our activity has had some positive result.

#### *Further Action in the Sudeten Question.*

12. The Embassy think it inevitable, in view of the events of last week-end, that His Majesty's Government should take an even more prominent part than hitherto in promoting a settlement of the Sudeten problem.

13. They agree with Mr. Newton in thinking that in present circumstances it is better to go on doing something than to do nothing.

14. They would favour the despatch of an investigator or commission of enquiry to Czechoslovakia, provided that this is done under British and not under international auspices, and provided that operations would be confined to Czechoslovak territory, the object of the investigation or enquiry being two-fold, namely, a study of the problem and an enquiry into incidents should they arise.

15. Unlike Mr. Newton, they do not believe that Dr. Benes seriously intends to make a comprehensive settlement, but rather that he relies on France, Soviet Russia and Great Britain to save him from the consequences of his recalcitrancy. This view is shared by the French and United States Ambassadors at Berlin.

16. They think that the German Government would like a peaceful settlement of the question. Sir N. Henderson is convinced that Herr von Ribbentrop was speaking Herr Hitler's mind when, on his return from Italy (where Czechoslovakia was obviously discussed), he said that the German Government 'heartily welcomed' our action at Prague and wanted a peaceful solution.

17. They agree with Mr. Newton in thinking that the settlement must be in two parts, i.e., (a) self-administration on something like the lines of the Carlsbad programme, within the frontier of the Czechoslovak State; (b) some readjustment of Czechoslovakia's foreign relations.

18. Like Mr. Newton, they think it premature to propose a plebiscite.

19. They think that self-administration for the Sudeten areas would be a first step towards incorporation in the Reich. The limits of the area under self-administration would mark the future frontier. If it should so suit the Reich Government, incorporation would not necessarily take place. But in any event, while the period of self-administration lasted, there would be a gradual two-way movement of the population, Czechs, Jews and anti-Nazi Germans moving out of the self-administered German areas, and pro-Nazi Germans from Czech areas moving into them. This process would make incorporation an easier process, when the time was ripe. In any event, the Embassy think that the German Government would prefer this kind of process to a surgical operation by plebiscite. The Embassy think that His Majesty's Government, having taken a hand in this Sudeten question, must go through with it. They regard the present operation as the first serious attempt made since the war to tackle one of the causes (rather than merely one of the symptoms) of European unrest, and to promote peaceful change in one of the danger spots of Europe.

20. They suggest that if the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein break down, it might be desirable for us to approach the German Government, and to discuss direct with them the terms of an equitable settlement. Once His Majesty's Government and the German Government had made up their minds on such a plan, it would be for the German Government to make Herr Henlein accept it, and for His Majesty's

Government to invoke the assistance of the French Government in imposing it upon the Czechoslovak Government. In that event, Czechoslovakia might receive a guarantee from both France and Germany, and the settlement might be 'witnessed' (to use Dr. Benes's word) by Great Britain and Italy.

21. If His Majesty's Government are to intervene to this extent, the case for despatching a Commission of Enquiry to Czechoslovakia to study the Sudeten problem and recommend a settlement becomes a strong one.

W. STRANG

H.M. EMBASSY, PARIS

May 30, 1938

*Additional Note to No. 338 (p. 394)*

During the preparation of this volume, telegram No. 125 to Prague could not be traced in the Foreign Office archives. This missing telegram was, however, found just before the revised proofs of the volume were being sent to press. The telegram contained a summary of a message from Herr Henlein to Sir R. Vansittart (see No. 353, note 1). Herr Henlein stated that his talks with Dr. Hodza had led to no result: that he feared 'incidents' unless the troops were withdrawn from the Sudeten areas, and that, at his next meeting with Dr. Hodza, he would be forced 'by the intense indignation' of the Sudeten Germans to hand in written demands. These demands would not go beyond those discussed by Herr Henlein in London. Herr Henlein felt that the delays seriously affected his own position, and asked that H.M.G. should make representations to Prague 'before it was too late'.

A reply was sent on May 26 encouraging him to continue the negotiations and suggesting that 'in view of the advice given from' London to the Czechoslovak Government, there were good chances of progress, but that Herr Henlein should not make 'pre-conditions' and should 'treat the negotiations as confidential while they were in progress'.

Telegram No. 125 also (i) informed Mr. Newton that M. Masaryk saw no 'real difficulty' in the acceptance of the proposals made by Herr Henlein while in London, (ii) instructed Mr. Newton to make clear to the Czechoslovak Government that 'clear and definite progress' at the next meeting was 'absolutely indispensable'.

## CHAPTER V

### Further negotiations with a view to facilitating a settlement of the Sudeten question

(May 31–July 14, 1938)

#### No. 351

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 31, 4.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 237 Telegraphic [C 5220/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, May 31, 1938, 1.40 p.m.

Chief of Staff informed Air Attaché last night that majority of squadrons were now back at their normal peace time aerodromes. Aircraft on patrol did not approach nearer than ten kilometres to the frontier and then returned to their normal aerodromes instead of to advanced landing grounds. Chief of Staff particularly asked that this information should be treated as confidential. He also stated that of those called up in air force last week the older as well as a large number of others having special reasons had already returned to their homes.

Please inform the War Office and Air Ministry.

Repeated Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 352

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 31, 11.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 252 Telegraphic [C 5217/1941/18]*

BERLIN, May 31, 1938, 8.30 p.m.

My telegram 248.<sup>1</sup>

State Secretary informed me to-day that while the views of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in regard to proposed commission were generally on the lines foreshadowed in above telegram and while German Government welcomed observers who would establish facts they were inclined to deprecate constitution of an *ad hoc* commission which 'would give appearance of [? perpetuating] and legitimizing a state of unrest'.

In their opinion it would amount to admission that there must be troubles, whereas the best means of avoiding those troubles would be removal of causes which tended to create them, i.e. withdrawal of troops from Sudeten areas.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 337.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 142 Telegraphic [C 5234/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 31, 1938, 10.10 p.m.*

1. We have good reason to believe that during his conversation with Dr. Hodza on May 30, Dr. Kundt put forward in detail the propositions outlined by Herr Henlein during his London visit, and that accordingly the question of foreign policy, reparations, and 'Weltanschauung' did not figure in the proposals. We understand further that Dr. Hodza promised to let the Sudeten Party know at the end of this week whether or not he could negotiate on this basis.<sup>1</sup>

2. These proposals commended themselves as reasonable here to persons of widely differing political thought and I think it of the highest importance that the Czechoslovak Government should accept them as a basis of discussion, since in my belief it should not be impossible to reach a solution along these lines. I have reason to know that if a settlement is very much longer delayed, there will be increasing danger of a serious and perhaps disastrous deterioration in the situation.

3. In these circumstances we must leave Dr. Benes in no doubt that if such a failure to reach an early settlement should result from the unwillingness of the Czechoslovak Government to move along lines that seem reasonable here, this would exercise an immediate and adverse effect upon the interest taken in the problem in this country and upon the sympathy felt for the Czechoslovak Government in their treatment of it.

4. You will see from my telegram to Paris No. 175<sup>2</sup> that I am instructing His Majesty's Ambassador to press the French Government to instruct your French colleague to make representations on similar lines and to add certain special arguments arising out of the Treaty relations between France and Czechoslovakia.

5. I consider that the time has come when representations on these lines should be made to Dr. Benes personally, and if your French colleague is armed with similar instructions, there would seem to be advantages in your seeing the President together.

6. If you should find that this will mean more than a day or two's delay, you should see Dr. Benes alone.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> The information referred to in paragraph 1 of this telegram reached the Foreign Office through private messages sent by Herr Henlein on his own initiative to Sir R. Vansittart. Subsequent messages sent by Herr Henlein, or to him, are referred to in Nos. 384, note 3, 432, 433, 454, 457, 488 and 527. See also note on page 416.

<sup>2</sup> No. 354.



*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 175 Telegraphic [C 5234/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 31, 1938, 10.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 172<sup>1</sup> paragraph 4 and my telegram to Prague No. 142.<sup>2</sup>

1. I earnestly hope that the French Government will feel not less urgently than do His Majesty's Government the importance of putting the greatest possible pressure upon Dr. Benes in person without delay. We should hope therefore that they will be able to instruct the French Minister in Prague to use to Dr. Benes similar language to that contained in my telegram to Prague under reference.

2. In view of the special relation with which France stands towards Czechoslovakia, I would suggest that the French Government should carry the argument a step further and should warn Dr. Benes that if through any fault of his, the present opportunity to reach a settlement is missed, the French Government would be driven to reconsider their own position *vis-à-vis* Czechoslovakia. You will recollect that, as reported in your telegram No. 150<sup>3</sup> of May 22, M. Bonnet told you that if Czechoslovakia were really unreasonable the French Government might well declare that France considered herself released from her bond. My feeling is that the moment has now come for a warning to be given to the Czechoslovak Government on these lines.

Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Rome, Budapest and Warsaw.

<sup>1</sup> No. 347.<sup>2</sup> No. 353.<sup>3</sup> No. 286.

## No. 355

*Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)**No. 267 [C 5420/1941/18]*MOSCOW, *May 31, 1938*

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 248<sup>1</sup> of the 16 May, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a report by Colonel Firebrace, military attaché at this Embassy, on conversations which he has recently had with his German and Czechoslovak colleagues respectively on the subject of the probable attitude of the Soviet Government towards an attack on Czechoslovakia. The report appears to me to be of considerable interest, although Colonel Firebrace's conclusions do not differ from the opinion which Lord Chilton and myself have already had the honour to express to your Lordship on this subject. It will be seen that the Czechoslovak military attaché, though maintaining a hopeful attitude in regard to the possibility of Soviet military assistance, was able to adduce nothing really concrete in support of his optimism beyond the assertion, which may or may not be correct, that there

<sup>1</sup> No. 222.

has been a strengthening of the Kiev military district. The German military attaché, on the other hand, expressed the opinion in no uncertain terms that, in view of the present weakness of the Red army—a weakness which, it will be observed, Colonel Dastich himself could not deny—it was unlikely that Soviet military support of Czechoslovakia would be forthcoming. The opinions expressed by both these officers may, of course, be regarded as containing an element of propaganda, but it certainly seems that General Köstring has more reason on his side.

2. I would call your Lordship's attention, incidentally, to the not uninteresting admission, made by General Köstring, that, but for the purge in the Red army, the Germans would not now be in Austria. The general's solemn assurance that the late Marshal Tukhachevski had never been in the pay of Germany, and had always been regarded by the German General Staff as Francophile, is also of real, though retrospective, interest; despite allegations to the contrary made in many quarters at the time of Marshal Tukhachevski's fall, this Embassy has always been of the opinion that the late marshal was innocent of the charges of perfidy brought against him.

3. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Berlin and Prague.

I have, &c.,  
G. VEREKER

ENCLOSURE IN No. 355

*Colonel Firebrace to Mr. Vereker*

MOSCOW, May 30, 1938

Sir,

I have the honour to report that on the 18th May I called on Colonel Dastich, the Czechoslovakian military attaché, with the main object of finding out whether he had any definite information which would tend to support his optimistic opinion regarding the action of the Soviet Union in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia. In this, on the whole, I was not very successful, but I obtained information which may be of a certain value.

2. Colonel Dastich began by reaffirming his opinion that the Soviet Union would at once react to German offensive action against Czechoslovakia 'with all her strength'. By this he meant that her action would not be confined to air action. The moment France took action the Soviet Union would do likewise. This was in accordance with their pact with the Soviet Union. Colonel Dastich, in general, had a high opinion of the fighting qualities of the Red army and of the training of the lower formations. He revealed to me, in confidence, that they now had Czechoslovakian officers doing a period of attachment to Red Army units. He was inclined to think that the reintroduction of the commissar might be considered a temporary measure instituted on account of the trouble in the Red army during 1937. He thought that the evil influence of political control would decrease as soon as the purge stopped and more stable conditions became general.

3. I discussed with Colonel Dastich some of the weak points of the Red army, and on this found him in general agreement, though he made an attempt to minimise their effect on the efficiency of the Red army. On the question of the High Command he, however, agreed that that was a serious weakness . . . .<sup>1</sup> He attempted to minimise the probable weakness of the Russian transport system by saying that during the summer the country was to a large extent passable on all country roads, even for lorries. The railway, he thought, would be up to its task.

4. We then passed to the consideration of rumoured movements of troops towards the western frontier, on which I myself have little definite information. He told me that he had definite information, based on facts, that there had been a reinforcement of the Kiev military district, additional infantry divisions and tank units having proceeded there recently. Indeed, it was quite possible that some or all of the mechanised corps from the Moscow military district had gone to Kiev. To a lesser extent he thought it possible that the White Russian military district had been reinforced. There was a general increase taking place in the number of infantry divisions, and he would not be surprised if, by the end of 1938, the total number had been increased to 110. At the present moment the generally-accepted figure for the number of Soviet infantry divisions is about 97, so this would represent a considerable increase. Colonel Dastich laid considerable stress on the strength of the Soviet Air Force, stating that he considered that the monthly output of aeroplanes of all types was 450, and that this was now being increased.

5. Colonel Dastich said that Czechoslovakia was confident of being able to give a good account of herself in the event of an attack by the Germans. At the risk of provoking my mirth, he would say that he thought they could hold out against Germany for about three months. Of course, if neither France nor the Soviet Union gave them active support they could not fight, and would have to make terms with Germany. He was particularly suspicious of the attitude of Poland, and again said that, in his opinion, at the very outset of hostilities a demand would have to be made that Poland should define her attitude. It was evident that his opinion was that Poland would be found on the side of Germany.

6. On the 20th May I called on the German military attaché, General Köstring, who had recently returned from Lithuania, where he is also accredited. General Köstring has a particularly good knowledge of Russia and the Russians as he was brought up in this country. I would not consider General Köstring a violent Nazi supporter, and my personal relations with him have always been extremely friendly.

7. The general began by describing his trip by car to Lithuania. He had many difficulties on the way owing to the bad roads and the difficulty in getting petrol, even in big towns. He said that new roads had been built, one from Vitebsk and the other from Veliki Luki towards the Polish frontier. He had found the Lithuanians thoroughly frightened and bitterly disappointed at the failure of the Soviet Union to support them at the time of the Polish

<sup>1</sup> A personal reference is here omitted.

ultimatum. At this point the general interjected: 'The Soviet army is no longer of international importance.' He added that, in his opinion, the Lithuanian General Staff had never been in very close touch with the Red army staff.

8. During a period of leave subsequent to his Lithuanian journey he had been in Rome during the visit of Hitler and had been present at most of the parades and functions. The parades were very impressive and the troops looked good, but he remarked that it was obvious that the Italians had shown their best troops, and he could not think that the Italian army in general came up to this standard. The Italians had never been good soldiers and could not be made good fighters in one generation. In commenting on Austria the general said that the Austrians were quite a different nation from Germany and would require a lot of handling. In Austria the Germans would have their hands full for a year. He had a very low opinion of the fighting qualities of the Austrian soldier. Austrian troops were being sent into Germany and German troops to Austria. Vienna was now the headquarters of the 5th German Group.

9. The Red army had been good up to the end of 1936. 'If there had been no purge and it had gone on improving we should not now be in Austria.' But temporarily the Red army was finished, and he had found that the German War Ministry was not now interested in it. I enquired whether his statement applied also to the Red air force. He said that the Red air force was largely out of date, their only first-class machine being the S.B., but he did not think that these were yet being produced in series. The new American machines were not yet ready and could not be produced for some time.

10. Passing to a consideration of the purge in the Red army, he said that he reckoned that 60 per cent. of officers from the rank of colonel and upwards had gone. This in itself constituted a serious weakness and was accentuated by the fact that the Higher Command was extremely weak. Nearly all the senior officers who had been trained in Germany had gone, and as far as he knew there only remained Timoshenko, who commands the important military district of Kiev, and Petrovski, who is believed to be deputy to Marshal Budenni in the Moscow Military District. Voroshilov he considered a peasant with a peasant's mentality, shrewd but not a good commander. The Chief of Staff, Shaposhnikoff, he thought a good staff officer. Of Fedko, who is deputy to Voroshilov, he had only heard that he was a good regimental commander. It is noteworthy that the general, who formerly had an excellent personal acquaintance with most of the senior officers, had never even heard of Kovalev, who has recently been appointed to command the very important military district of White Russia. The weakest point of the Red Army was its High Command. With Tukhachevski and Uborevitch the army had been a danger to Germany, but was not so now. When referring to Tukhachevski, the general gave me his word of honour that the marshal had not been in the pay of Germany. By the German General Staff he had always been regarded as a Francophile.

11. Other weak points in the Red army were the commissar system, which might have a very bad effect, though it depended to a certain extent on the personalities of the respective commander and commissar, the lack of heavy artillery—though here the general added that they might not really need much of this—the disorganisation of industry, the difficulties of petrol supply and distribution, considering the large requirements of the kolkhoz, and, finally, the poor quality of the lower officer ranks. On this latter point he added: 'If we ourselves are having trouble in training our young officers, how much more trouble will the Red army have with their unintelligent officer cadres!' The strong points of the Red army were its numbers, the good fighting quality of the Russian soldier and the number of tanks.

12. From a consideration of these points the general thought that the Red army would not take the offensive, 'certainly not unless the French and the British had taken the field'. He himself doubted that the French would attack. He added, however, that when you had to deal with dictators you never could be certain, but it was against all logic for the Soviet Union to go to war this year. Stalin must know that war would mean a danger to his régime, and Stalin thought first of himself and then possibly afterwards of Bolshevik principles. It is interesting to note that, although Czechoslovakia was not directly mentioned during the conversation, the general's views seemed to be based on the eventuality of a European war owing to German action there.

13. The difficulties which the Japanese were experiencing in China tended to free the hands of the Soviet Union, and would make it easier for her to take part in a European war. In this event it was almost certain that her main effort would be directed from the Kiev Military District on Lwów and Warsaw, as an advance through Roumania with large forces was impossible. In general the ground on the Lwów line of advance was suitable for the use of her cavalry and tanks, though it would be very difficult in places if there were heavy rain. It was possible that she would have a certain initial success in this area, as she would attack in great strength and in vastly superior numbers. Although the general did not actually say so, I got the impression that he thought that the attack would later be held up when it had exhausted its initial impetus.

14. It will be seen that on points of fact there is not a great difference between the opinion of the Czechoslovakian and the German military attachés, but it is perhaps natural that they react to their own appreciations in different ways. The Czech, in spite of the admitted deficiencies of the Red army, seems to rely on the pact, and apparently believes that the Soviet Union will fulfil her pledged word. He is unable to produce any concrete evidence in support of his views other than reports of the strengthening of the Kiev Military District. The German draws the logical conclusion from the weakness of the Red army, and considers that it is unlikely that they would support Czechoslovakia. I had the impression that this is his genuine opinion, and that he has reported in this sense to the German General Staff. It is to be noted, however, that he makes a reservation for the unknown factor of the



will of the dictator and does not, therefore, altogether exclude the possibility, though he doubts the probability of a Soviet offensive.

15. In general I am in full agreement with the summing-up of the situation by General Köstring. He and Colonel Dastich have both enlarged on the weak points of the Red army, which should undoubtedly lessen their desire to indulge in a war which might have very dangerous consequences for the Soviet régime. The only points which I myself can see which might be held to support the possibility of offensive action are the strengthening of the Kiev Military District (on which we ourselves have no very certain information), the great effort which is being made in the army to prepare for the eventuality of war and, finally, the fact that the war mentality is being strenuously cultivated not only in the army but also amongst the civil population. I think it is true to say that the Soviet Union considers that war, if not inevitable, is highly likely at some time not too far distant. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the Soviet Union would be prepared to fight this year. I remain, therefore, of the opinion that the Soviet Union will do everything possible to avoid engaging in war this year, and that it will find any pretext to avoid the necessity of having to fulfil its engagements to Czechoslovakia and France.

I have, &c.,

R. C. FIREBRACE, *Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché.*

No. 356

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 7.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 247 Telegraphic [C 5290/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, *June 1, 1938, 4.55 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 141<sup>1</sup> reached me on the eve of a visit to President of the Council when I had in any case intended to enquire what progress was being made with 'disbandment'. I use this word because I believe Czechoslovak Government and General Staff do not admit that there has been any real 'mobilisation' and object to use of that term.

Dr. Hodza informed me on May 31 that a reduction has been proceeding since and including last Saturday. In accordance with normal dispositions made some time ago 8,000 reservists were being called up at the beginning of June for usual annual reservists' training. Having regard to this increase of strength the reduction in numbers who had been exceptionally called to the colours would be increased from something between 10,000 and 15,000 up to a minimum number of 32,000 to be released in the course of present week and next week by June 10 after which date there would be further reductions.

Dr. Hodza has no objection to this information being passed on through His Majesty's Ambassador privately and confidentially to German Govern-

<sup>1</sup> No. 345.

ment. He thinks it however desirable to defer any public announcement to a later stage when it will carry more weight because by that time the public will be becoming aware that releases are already actually in progress. President of the Council could not go into further details but as regards withdrawals from frontier please see last two sentences of third paragraph of my telegram No. 219<sup>2</sup>,<sup>3</sup> 220<sup>4</sup>, and 237<sup>5</sup>.

Dr. Hodza further told me that particular attention will be paid to removal of troops from mixed language areas for completion of their training as far as possible elsewhere. They would also be removed from posts where they might constitute a hindrance to traffic and to communications.

In the course of our conversation on this subject and in hope of strengthening Dr. Hodza's hand I suggested that from point of view merely of prestige which might be brought up in some quarters the Government were more likely to gain than lose by an early return to normal. Moreover any fear of an external attack was . . .<sup>6</sup> over, to which Doctor Hodza interjected 'but for how long?' I continued that precisely in order to avert further dangers it was essential to press on with a solution of Sudeten German question to which end early disbandment would contribute. Another point which I mentioned was that Sudeten area looked to many foreign observers as though it were foreign occupied territory and this, apart from the danger of incidents, was a very unfortunate impression to give just now.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> No. 339.

<sup>3</sup> The words 'and my telegrams Nos.' appear to have been omitted.

<sup>4</sup> No. 340.

<sup>5</sup> No. 351.

<sup>6</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 357

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 8.15 p.m.)*

*No. 169 Telegraphic [C 5277/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 1, 1938, 6.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 175.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs promises to instruct French Minister at Prague accordingly.

M. Bonnet thinks however that representations to M. Benes should be made separately by British and French Ministers because:

- (1) French Minister will have to go somewhat further than British, and
- (2) A joint *démarche* again attracts too much public attention and thereby encourages Germans on their side to show themselves unreasonable.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Prague, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 354.

<sup>2</sup> Sir E. Phipps was informed on June 2 that His Majesty's Government concurred in the proposed procedure.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 10.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 253 Telegraphic [C 5318/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 1, 1938, 7.33 p.m.

Your telegram No. 221.<sup>1</sup>

I took the opportunity of the visit I paid yesterday to State Secretary to revert to the question of German press attacks and I told State Secretary that the point was frankly whether or not his Government believed in sincerity and honesty of the desire of His Majesty's Government to find a peaceful solution of Sudeten question which would be satisfactory to all parties concerned. I could not believe they did not, yet the tone of their press and speeches such as that of Dr. Goebbels not only led one to believe they did not but also aroused resentment in England and made the ungrateful task of His Majesty's Government still more difficult. I read to him in this connexion the passages from your telegram under reference.

State Secretary assured me that German Government had in fact confidence in the good intentions of His Majesty's Government while taking exception to our methods. They appreciated our diplomatic action at Prague but at the same time considered our efforts there had not best been served by public announcement of our strong representations at Berlin which had laid stress on the possibility of a conflict and probability of British intervention in certain eventualities.

Generally speaking, in his view secrecy in which its efficacy depended, should be the essence of our intervention both at Prague and Berlin, whereas the publicity given to our recent action in Berlin was merely calculated to stiffen resistance of Czechoslovak Government (see point 3 of my telegram No. 246<sup>2</sup>). State Secretary undertook however to report my remarks faithfully both to Minister for Foreign Affairs and to Dr. Goebbels.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 344.

<sup>2</sup> No. 335.

## No. 359

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 2, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 254 Telegraphic [C 5297/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 1 1938, 1.56 p.m.

Your telegram No. 223.<sup>1</sup>

I agree that it is advisable to consider possibility of breakdown of negotiations.

Nevertheless I fear that proposal for mediation by an international commission will not prove any more acceptable to German Government than proposal for sending an international commission to Sudeten territory at present stage (see my telegram No. 252<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> No. 347.

<sup>2</sup> No. 352.

Herr Hitler takes the view that Germany cannot 'allow third parties to interfere in settlement of her relationship with countries with large German populations' (my conversation of March 3). He has consistently maintained that settlement must be negotiated directly between Czechoslovak Government and Henlein and that Germany will only agree to a solution acceptable to the latter. The intervention of His Majesty's Government in dispute is welcome only in so far as it serves to bring pressure to bear on Czechoslovak Government to meet Sudeten demands and thus to preserve peace.

If negotiations break down Herr Hitler, whose views on multilateral negotiations and conferences are known, will certainly not agree to mediation of a publicly constituted international commission even if it included a German member. An official of the Chancery recently volunteered to a member of my staff that Herr Hitler would not even agree to a conference of four Powers summoned to devise and impose an agreed solution on Czechoslovakia. The utmost he would agree to in my opinion would be *secret*<sup>3</sup> conversations through diplomatic channel between German Government on the one hand and His Majesty's Government and possibly French Government on behalf of the other with a view to drawing up a settlement which he would impose on Henlein and which His Majesty's Government and French Government would be expected to press on Czechoslovakia.

From point of view of internal politics the Chancellor is determined to maintain in public that Germany will not allow the fate of Germans to be determined by foreigners or to be the subject of diplomatic bargaining. Any mediation undertaken by third parties in regard to removal of deadlock and terms of settlement must therefore be secret (see also in this connexion last paragraph of my immediately preceding telegram).<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> This word is underlined in the original.

<sup>4</sup> No. 358.

### No. 360

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 9.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 255 Telegraphic [C 5287/4786/18]*

BERLIN, June 1, 1938, 7.25 p.m.

I mentioned to State Secretary yesterday that Czechoslovak Government according to my information had already begun to withdraw some of the troops from the frontier and to demobilise such technical reserves as were not required for the maintenance of public order. State Secretary said that he regarded this as very important since it constituted at least a beginning and asked whether he could let it be known confidentially (presumably to the Chancellor) and I agreed. I trust therefore that withdrawals etc. will be on sufficiently large scale to carry conviction and I so informed the French Ambassador this morning.

State Secretary asked what Mr. Strang's impressions were of his visit to Prague. I told him above all else in importance they were to the effect that

M. Benes really meant business. Sceptical though he genuinely is I think State Secretary was impressed.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

No. 361

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 145 Telegraphic [C 5185/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 1, 1938, 8.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 234.<sup>1</sup>

You do not say whether you intend to inform Minister for Foreign Affairs of the reports which you have been receiving as to the behaviour of the troops in the Sudetendeutschen area.

2. Unless you see any objection, I think it would be useful that you should do so. Could you not encourage Czech Government to pay reasonable and prompt compensation for damage done, and thus abate natural resentment?

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 343.

No. 362

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 2, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 252 Telegraphic [C 5285/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 1, 1938, 9.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 172<sup>1</sup> to Paris.

As seen from here what we are most likely to be faced with in the event of negotiations between the Government and Henlein Party breaking down is demand for a plebiscite. Henlein has indeed already warned us of this himself and underlying desire for plebiscite may on occasion be real reason for breakdown on the side of Henlein Party or at least for lack of effort in that quarter in trying to prevent and resolve any deadlocks which may arise.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 347.

No. 363

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 2, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 257 Telegraphic [C 5286/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 1, 1938, 9.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 251<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 247.<sup>2</sup>

President of the Council has just telephoned me personally to say that

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported that the Military Attaché had urged on a liaison officer from the Greek General Staff, who had called on him in connexion with an incident at Eger, the importance of returning to normal conditions without delay if incidents were to be avoided.

<sup>2</sup> No. 356.



disbandment to be effected by June 10 will be increased in the following weeks<sup>3</sup> to a total of 104,000.

Repeated to Berlin. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>3</sup> This word should have read 'week'. See No. 376.

No. 364

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)*

*No. 189 [C 5416/2470/55]*

WARSAW, June 1, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that, as was foreshadowed in my telegram No. 44, Saving,<sup>1</sup> of the 22nd May, two separate delegations arrived in Poland from Czechoslovakia to welcome the party of Slovaks from America who are bringing the original of the Pittsburgh 'Agreement' to Prague. One of these delegations, headed by Father Buday, Vice-Marshal of the Czechoslovak Senate, represented the autonomist Slovak party of Father Hlinka; the other delegation included the Czechoslovak Minister in Warsaw and was sent officially by the Czechoslovak Government to welcome the party from America. The greatest prominence was given here to the impending arrival of the Slovaks from America and to the arrival of Father Hlinka's delegation on its way to Gdynia, but next to nothing was said about the official delegation. The two delegations stayed at separate hotels and at first did not communicate. The autonomist delegation was received by the vice-marshals of the Senate and the Diet and by the President of the City of Warsaw, and subsequently a dinner was given in its honour by the association known as the Friends of Slovakia, headed by Senator Gwizdz and by a group of Polish Deputies and Senators. The dinner was attended by M. Miedzinski, one of the moving spirits of the Camp of National Unity, by the two Vice-Marshals of the Diet, by a Vice-Marshal of the Senate, as well as by the *rapporteur* of the budget of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the Diet. The delegation was also shown a demonstration of Polish tanks. No similar attentions were paid to the official delegation.

2. Subsequently the two delegations united at their own request (I believe this was due largely to the efforts of my Czech colleague) and came back with the American Slovaks to Warsaw, where a dinner was arranged for the occasion by the municipality. From what I have heard, it would appear that the American Slovaks were quite unprepared for the nature of the reception which they were given, and, indeed, they may well have been surprised by the speeches which were made. The somewhat over-ardent welcome for the Slovaks expressed by the President of the City of Warsaw might have passed without comment, but M. Walewski, the *rapporteur* of the budget in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who spoke next, went even further, and apparently delivered an attack on the Czechoslovak Government as such

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

(notwithstanding the presence of the Czechoslovak Minister), and, according to my information, even went so far as to say that Czechoslovakia was a fiction. The American Slovaks were shocked by this speech, and in his reply their leader, M. Hletko, emphasised that the American Slovaks had not come to destroy but to build up a better understanding between Slovaks and Czechs. They wished, he said, to attain unity in the Czechoslovak Republic, which they had helped to create, and he emphasised that the Slovaks looked for a happier future within the framework of that republic.

3. The official encouragement given to the Slovak autonomists has been reflected in the governmental press, which has done everything to emphasise the complaints of the Slovaks and their insistence on autonomy. The officially inspired 'Gazeta Polska' went so far as to publish a long leading article on the 24th May, taking the line that the Czechs having by false promises induced the Slovaks to form a common republic, had done their best by various forms of oppression to erase them and their language from the list of nationalities hoping to create a new and fictitious nation which they called in advance the Czechoslovaks. The article concluded by describing the policy of Father Hlinka's party as national sovereignty for the Slovaks, and emphasised, in conclusion, the importance of such a demand being made at a time when the Czech State was exposed to serious danger. I may add that a somewhat similar line was taken in a recent broadcast by M. Walewski, who again said that Czechoslovakia was 'a fiction'.

4. Meanwhile, as mentioned in my telegram No. 46, Saving,<sup>2</sup> of the 28th May, a continuous campaign has been conducted here against the Czechs in connexion with the elections in the Polish districts of Czechoslovakia. The result of the elections in the thirty-two communes in which Poles are interested has apparently been a 15 to 20 per cent. increase in the Polish vote. The official Polish Telegraph Agency, in a message from Morawska Ostrawa (published by the 'Gazeta Polska' under the head-line: 'Victory in Spite of Unheard-of Repressions and Terrorism'), complained of the methods used by the Czechs in waging their electoral campaign. The main allegations were:—

- (a) The calling up of reservists for the purpose of diminishing the Polish vote.
- (b) Interference with Polish electioneering campaign.
- (c) Confiscation of Polish press.
- (d) Intimidation of voters.

5. What truth there may be in these allegations I do not know. Of greater moment is the policy of the dominant clique in the Polish Government and Foreign Ministry, as evinced both by the ignoble encouragement of extremism among the Slovak autonomists and by the violent criticism of the conduct of the Czechoslovak communal elections permitted in the governmental press.

6. The underlying motives of this unavowed but increasingly evident trend of policy are doubtless those described in my despatches Nos. 127<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. In this despatch Sir H. Kennard transmitted a note prepared by the

137<sup>4</sup> of the 6th and 19th April respectively. In private conversation, unofficial and in rare cases official, Poles admit their uneasy feelings that the rapprochement with Germany is degenerating into an undignified imitation of the small fish that seek their meat in the wake of the shark, and, although not too much weight need be given to the power of the Opposition in Poland at the present time, the National Democrat 'Kurjer Warszawski' and the Socialist 'Robotnik' have published caustic comments on the reception of the Slovak delegation and also warnings regarding the danger to Poland of German encroachments in Central Europe.

7. M. Beck is, I gather, apt to claim some credit for absenting himself (first in Stockholm and later in Tallinn) during the Czech communal elections, on the ground that this shows his disbelief in the danger of war and his disinterestedness in Czechoslovakia; but during his absence, and certainly with his connivance, the campaign against Czechoslovak integrity continues. I feel sure that it is artificial and is not due to any deep feelings on the part of the largely inarticulate masses of the people of Poland.

8. I cannot yet say that I have any concrete proof that the considered policy of the Polish Government goes beyond my description of it in paragraph 6 of my despatch No. 127 referred to above, and I have no doubt that, if a momentous decision had to be taken, there would be grave differences of view between the three persons, namely, the President, the Marshal and M. Beck, who at present are mainly responsible for the destiny of this country, but I have thought it as well to draw your Lordship's attention to the continued evidence that M. Beck is endeavouring to convince the Polish people that in the Czechoslovak issue their interests would dictate the weakening rather than the strengthening of that country.

9. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Minister in Prague.

I have, &c.,

H. W. KENNARD

Military Attaché regarding the military consequences for Poland of a possible German domination of Czechoslovakia. The Military Attaché's review indicated that it was clearly in Poland's interest that neither Germany nor Russia should dominate central and eastern Czechoslovakia but offered the opinion, with which Sir H. Kennard concurred, 'that of the two unpleasant contingencies, Poland would probably prefer the former if a choice had to be made'. In paragraph 6 of his covering despatch Sir H. Kennard concluded that 'although the considered policy of the Polish Government does not, in my view, go further than the intention to sit on the fence as long as possible, and in the meantime to stake out a claim in Czechoslovakia in order to ensure that in certain eventualities the advantages will not be wholly on the German side, I have thought it necessary to draw your Lordship's attention to a trend of thought in this country, which seems to indicate on which side of the fence the Polish Government may, from instincts of self-preservation, descend, if and when it becomes clear that a decision can no longer be deferred'.

\* Not printed. In this despatch Sir H. Kennard transmitted a record of a conversation between the Military Attaché and a junior officer in the Polish Ministry of War, in which the latter had indicated that military circles in Poland would, on the whole, welcome the establishment of a common frontier between Poland and Hungary.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)*  
*No. 183 [C 5435/4786/18]*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum from the Military Attaché, dated the 31st May, 1938, respecting a tour of the frontier districts to the north and north-west of Prague to observe outward form of military measures.

PRAGUE, *June 1, 1938*

ENCLOSURE IN No. 365

*Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge to Mr. Newton*

On the 28th and 29th May I made a fairly extensive tour by car of the frontier districts to the north and north-west of Prague with the object of observing the outward form of the military measures recently taken and of ascertaining as far as possible in the time available their effect on the Sudeten population. I had no mandate to conduct any form of enquiry, and, although I mentioned beforehand to Colonel Hajek of the General Staff that I proposed to motor through the area in question, I naturally refrained from establishing personal contacts with soldiers or police. Having been given the Czech side of the picture so thoroughly in Prague, and from so many different sources, I hoped on this occasion to see a little of the other side.

The itinerary taken is not of much consequence. Of the more important places visited the following may be mentioned:—

Böhmisch Leipa, Warnsdorf, Rumburg, Zwickau, Deutsch Gabel and Friedland.

I spent the night at Reichenberg.

It was apparent soon after entering the German-speaking districts that abnormal conditions prevailed, and the farther north one penetrated the more the area resembled an occupied territory. Apart from road blocks, of which there are a large number, not only near the frontier but as much as 20–25 miles in rear of it, sentries were on duty at bridges, cross-roads and a number of other places. These road blocks mostly consisted of three thick granite walls about 5 feet high and 10 yards apart, and a zigzag passage-way was left through which cars could pass at a slow pace. Dumps of big stones were available in the immediate vicinity so that an impassable obstacle could quickly be constructed. In addition to these granite walls, trees had been cut down and were partially thrown across the road in front of the foremost wall. By being forced to proceed at a dead slow pace the sentries on duty were able to examine closely, and stop if necessary, all cars that passed through, but I did not see any case of search taking place or of any provocative behaviour on the part of the guards. In the vicinity of the frontier road blocks are more frequent, my impression being that each road of any importance is blocked at least twice, the blocks being some miles apart. Their

actual location is, of course, dependent on a military plan, and this fact is largely lost sight of by the inhabitants, who regard them as unnecessary impediments to normal communications. They are frequently heard to ask, so I understand, what possible use such and such a road block can possibly have, as, viewed by itself, its purpose is not apparent. My own impression is that they have been on the whole well sited, having regard to the possibility of covering them by fire from positions in the vicinity. It is not permitted to loiter in the vicinity of bridges, a large number of which have been prepared for demolition. As, however, some bridges are still apparently unguarded, it should be possible for observers living in the area to determine those which have been so selected. The frontier fortifications which I passed, all of which were of the pill-box type (concrete posts for two machine guns), seemed to be manned at full strength. I frequently saw 6-7 men standing about one of these, though Colonel Hajek had told me that the lighter fortifications were only partially manned. It may be, of course, that those in the vicinity of the roads have been differently treated in this respect to those which are more remote and cannot be seen. I was able to note two or three posts which have been added to the system since I was in this area two months ago. Doubtless there are many more.

For the rest, I made note of the following facts in regard to the military occupation. Many of the men on duty had no numbers on their collar badges. The reason for this is probably that reservists of regiments other than those normally stationed in the district had been drafted there, and the absence of numbers prevented identification. The collar numbers actually seen by me all belonged to the local regiments, but only about 50 per cent. of the troops displayed them. The General Staff have assured me that no units have been moved up from the interior, but I strongly suspect that individuals have, and some information which my chauffeur heard in Reichenberg lends colour to this theory. It seems likely also that a detachment of the 1st Mobile Division from Prague has been sent temporarily to Reichenberg. I hope to be able to confirm this, or otherwise, shortly.

The bearing of the troops, as far as I was able to observe it, was correct and unprovocative on the whole, though one sentry who stopped my car at a barricade was somewhat truculent in his manner; there are doubtless many others like him. The turnout was shocking, uniforms being badly fitting and not too clean and most of the men being unshaven. It is possible that a few days' growth may make them feel more in earnest about their jobs and inspire them with some form of moral uplift. What is certain is that a corresponding moral 'downlift' is the effect on the townsmen and country folk with whom they mingle. They are at once feared, despised and hated. This fact is unfortunately fundamental to the whole relationship between the Czech troops and the Sudeten Germans.

It is not necessary, I think, to go into further details with regard to the purely military aspects of my journey, and I will now turn to the broader question of the effect of the continuance in force of the emergency measures.

After dinner at Reichenberg the hotel manager asked me if I would see



two or three gentlemen who would like to meet me, and, after assuring myself that they were not journalists and saying that I could grant no interviews, consented to see them quite informally over a cup of coffee. I arranged for my wife to be present so as to lend a more informal air to the meeting. The gentlemen concerned turned out to be a Herr Forsche, leader of the Reichenberg section of the S.D.P., Dr. Katzer, another prominent member and a rather well-known citizen, and two younger men, also members of the party. Herr Forsche plunged at once into a tirade against the Czechs, and the soldiers in particular, quoting case after case of bullying, ill-treatment, desecration of property, and unnecessary arrests which had taken place in the vicinity in the last ten days. Details of the allegations against the Czech soldiers are not worth quoting, as there is no means whatever of verifying them, and it is the *ensemble* which matters most. The salient point they made was that, no matter what justification there might have been for the military measures in the first instance—and their legality was disputed—the continued presence of the troops in the German-speaking areas was becoming intolerable to the people and was certain to lead to trouble. In my opinion this contention is only too true. When Herr Forsche had finished the other three gentlemen signified their concurrence with his remarks and I was able to put a few questions.

In the first place, I asked outright what exactly would satisfy the party, and was told after some hesitation that the creation of a Czechoslovak State modelled entirely on the lines of Switzerland might yet perhaps save the 'Anschluss' with Germany. I did not press for more detail, and they seemed disinclined to discuss the subject further. The estimate they gave of the result of a plebiscite taken now was a large majority for transfer to Germany.

A point which I was particularly anxious to get a line on was the probable attitude of Sudeten German soldiers if called upon to fight against the Reich. I selected Dr. Katzer for this question, as throughout he had struck me as being a straightforward and decent type of man, an estimate subsequently confirmed by His Majesty's Consul, Mr. Pares. I reminded Dr. Katzer of the oath of allegiance which every conscript takes on joining. His reply to my question was to draw attention to the tradition of the Nibelungen, which he said expressed the attitude of all true German soldiers to their oath of allegiance, that is to say, to honour it with their life, even though it involved killing their own kith and kin. Dr. Katzer spoke with great earnestness. I glanced quickly at Herr Forsche to see his reaction, and I read in his eyes an expression of amused incredulity which was instantly changed to one of confusion when he saw me looking at him. The incident was actually rather tense, and I mention it only because from it I was able to confirm my previously held views on this very important question. I do not believe, and have never believed, that they will all either fight or all abstain. It is likely to depend upon the conscience of the individual, and the fact that there was obvious disagreement on this subject between two prominent members of the party is significant. Herr Forsche pointed out that, although the oath itself was freely taken, the men could not [*sic*] refuse to serve. The other three

men shook their heads in dissent. Dr. Katzer also maintained categorically that reports of the arming of the party were entirely without foundation. He did not believe that one man in a hundred had so much as a pistol in his possession.

After these gentlemen had left I saw His Majesty's Consul, Mr. Pares. He told me quite a lot about the four men, whom he knew quite well. As head of the Reichenberg group of the S.D.P.,<sup>1</sup> Herr Forsche has one of the most responsible posts in the organisation. Dr. Katzer and the others are also prominent officials. Mr. Pares told me that he had not personally seen any unseemly behaviour on the part of the Czech troops, either on duty or off duty, in the town. Mr. Elliot, the Vice-Consul, whom I saw next morning, said the same thing. Both were agreed that the bringing into force of article 22 had had a most salutary effect on the population, who were becoming very confident and overbearing latterly, saying, amongst other things derogatory to the Czechs, that they could, and would, do nothing to restrain the Sudetens. The lightning action which had been taken left them dumbfounded and considerably sobered. Mr. Elliott had heard that the arming of the Sudetens was to have started in earnest in a week's time, and that this had nipped the project in the bud. He was, however, not sure of the authenticity of this information.

With such violent and contradictory propaganda issuing from both sides it is impossible to arrive at the real truth of the allegations being made, but I was able to form certain impressions which I think are not wide of the mark. These may be summed up as follows:—

- (i) Incidents between the troops and the inhabitants are constantly occurring and further embittering the relations between the two factions.  
These incidents will persist until the emergency measures are revoked. Both sides are on edge and inclined to bait one another when the opportunity arises, in spite of stringent orders from above to avoid all provocation.
- (ii) Few complaints appear to have been made against Czech officers, whose personal behaviour has been on the whole correct.
- (iii) The parade of force is now quite unnecessary, the threat from Germany, which is believed to have existed, having passed, and the inhabitants having witnessed the speed and thoroughness with which the Czech army can act when required to.

The partial withdrawal of the troops which is now believed to have commenced will not suffice to remove the dangerously inflammable atmosphere pervading the Sudeten country.

The sooner the measures are all cancelled the better.

- (iv) From a military point of view the Czech army has gained some valuable experience. The dispositions which have been taken bear the mark of efficiency and careful planning.
- (v) Lastly, though one regrets to have to say it, the Czech and German races in the Sudeten area are so fundamentally antagonistic to one

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Sudeten German Party.

another that it is almost impossible to visualise them pulling together under any conditions which the Czechs can accept. But if a solution of any kind can in fact be found, it must, in my opinion, be based on the maximum degree of segregation.

H. C. T. STRONGE, *Lieutenant-Colonel,  
Military Attaché.*

PRAGUE, *May 31, 1938*

No. 366

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)*

*No. 184 [C 5418/1941/18]*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the copy of a despatch from H.M. Consul, Liberec.

PRAGUE, *June 1, 1938*

ENCLOSURE IN No. 366

*No. 26*

BRITISH CONSULATE, LIBEREC, *June 1, 1938*

Sir,

I have the honour to report that yesterday I drove through Karlsbad and observed that the groups of uniformed German 'Turners'<sup>1</sup>, who were very much in evidence during my last visit, have disappeared from the streets. The German greeting with which I was saluted then by nearly everyone on the road from Karlsbad to Prague, is now extinct. A friend in Karlsbad informed me that these changes are in fact the outward sign of the sobered outlook of the Sudetic German inhabitants of this district. Nevertheless they are inwardly furious that their hopes of immediate incorporation in Germany have been frustrated by the determination of the Czech Government.

2. I also passed through Komotau and Dux where serious incidents occurred two weeks ago. The headmaster of the German high school in Komotau, who seemed to be a reasonable and unprejudiced person, admitted that young Germans had provoked the soldiers by jogging them intentionally with their elbows in the streets. He also said that the number of injured in the incidents was not a hundred as given out in the Reich radio news but only fifteen. These people were the only ones who received injuries worthy of the name and were summoned to appear at the Komotau police-station in order that an official report might be drawn up. They disregarded the summons and failed to appear, and since their names were not known to the police it was impossible to trace them.

3. In Dux which is quite close to Komotau the positions are reversed and the Czechs seem to be the aggressors. They form a very numerous minority here—well over 45 per cent. of the total population—and as they are mainly

<sup>1</sup> i.e. members of gymnastic associations.

coal-miners their behaviour is rough and sometimes violent. The headmaster and two of his staff who talked to me were obviously very depressed and their accounts of the state of affairs appeared to be quite sincere. On May 28th during the school celebration of President Benes's birthday a policeman entered abruptly and complained that the flag displayed on the front of the building was an old one. A large crowd of angry Czechs was assembled outside the gates of the school but the policeman made no attempt to disperse it. He also complained that the flag was not displayed on the most prominent part of the building which faces the road though apparently it has been customary to hang the flag in the same place for years past. He hinted at the same time that the headmaster was disloyal, saying that 'for a certain occasion he would display many flags of another kind'. Stones are often thrown through the windows into the class rooms and into the playgrounds in spite of the fact that a policeman has been stationed outside to prevent this sort of thing. The headmaster said that his pupils are constantly menaced and often bullied or stoned on their way to school, and he has so far reported over a hundred cases of maltreatment to the police. In the majority of cases the attacks have been made by Czech children but adults have also taken a hand. Any German child wearing white stockings or a 'dirndl' dress is sure to be molested.

4. It has already been reported in the newspapers that a students' strike has taken place in Plan on account of the expulsion of some students who took part in the May Day demonstration of the Henlein party. I have now learned that sympathetic strikes were threatened in at least three schools—at Tetschen, Bodenbach, and Komotau—but they did not materialize. The headmaster in Komotau informed me that in his case the strike was called off through the intervention of a deputy of the Sudetic German party who threatened parents with expulsion from the party if they kept their children away from school. There is in fact a curious contradiction in the methods of the Henlein party. It is certainly a fact that strict instructions have been issued to the members that discipline must be observed and in the case mentioned above the party obviously exerted itself to prevent trouble. Yet on the other hand when incidents have occurred through the thoughtlessness or insolent behaviour of individuals they are exploited to the utmost in the party's newspapers. It is obviously too much to expect that the Henlein press should lay the blame directly upon its own members in any given case but the exaggerated and sometimes untruthful accounts laid before the public are a proof that at the centre there are irresponsible and unscrupulous persons at work who find in the incidents a useful instrument for stirring up trouble.

5. Of the incidents themselves one may say that they are probably not provoked intentionally by either side—except in the sense that they are produced by wilfully aggravating behaviour due to the excitement and tension of these unsettled times. They are a product rather than a cause of the intense national hatred: they are the result of years of imprudent propaganda on both sides.

6. All the way from Liberec to Karlsbad I saw signs of military activities. Many bridges, particularly those in the middle district near the Elbe are being mined now. I learned that near Teplitz furniture belonging to the peasants has been requisitioned and used for constructing barricades. Many people have been deprived of their crockery which is required by the soldiers. In one village where the farmers joined together and purchased a plough which is used by each one in turn, this plough has been taken by the soldiers so that the farmers are prevented from working in their fields and must remain idle. I have heard no such complaints from Liberec where the mobilization seems to have proceeded more smoothly. Farmers appear to have received compensation for the use of their horses and cars, &c. No doubt the money which they will receive for the fruit trees which have been cut down will not fully indemnify them for the loss of fruit over a number of years. But this is the most serious hardship of which I have heard in my immediate neighbourhood. It seems that when passers-by were called upon to assist in the erection of barricades direct threats were not used and anybody who was determined enough to refuse was eventually allowed to proceed. An employee of a local bank [who] was held up telephoned to his employer who got in touch with the military commander at once and was informed that soldiers have no power to requisition the services of civilians against their will.

7. The villages through which I passed last Sunday during the elections appeared to be very quiet. The decorations of pine branches and leaves, and the candles placed in the windows at night had a special significance as they are the customary decoration on Easter Sunday, the day of resurrection.

I have, &c.,

P. PARES

No. 367

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 237 Telegraphic [C 5287/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 2, 1938, 10.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 255.<sup>1</sup>

Please convey privately and confidentially to the German Government the information contained in paragraph 2 of Mr. Newton's telegram No. 247.<sup>2</sup> You might at the same time inform the German Government of the measures taken for the withdrawal of troops from the frontier contained in Prague telegram No. 219,<sup>3</sup> No. 220,<sup>4</sup> and No. 242<sup>5</sup> to me. You should not, however, pass on to the German Government the information contained in

<sup>1</sup> No. 360.

<sup>2</sup> No. 356.

<sup>3</sup> No. 339.

<sup>4</sup> No. 340.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported an official communiqué on the severe measures taken by the Czechoslovak authorities to prevent Czech aircraft crossing the German frontier, and stated that the German Minister had been informed of these measures. See No. 332, note 5.



Prague telegram No. 257,<sup>6</sup> until you have made certain from Mr. Newton that there is no objection to your doing so.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>6</sup> No. 363.

### No. 368

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 259 Telegraphic [C 5359/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 2, 1938, 7.5 p.m.

I think it very desirable that we should continue to show sympathetic appreciation of the fact that Czechoslovak Government have hitherto accepted very far-reaching and doubtless unpalatable advice and appear to have been doing their utmost of late at any rate to cope with the problems which might well baffle the wisest statesmanship.

For although Czechoslovak Government have hitherto responded there must be a danger that if pressed too far and in particular to a point which seemed to the Czech people seriously to compromise integrity and sovereignty of their country the Government might be unable to carry their public and above all the army with them. I cannot be sure for example that such a point would not be reached if plebiscite were to be demanded by Henlein party and supported by Western Powers.

Government have hitherto been well in control and their authority was enhanced by events of May 21. But if integrity and independence of a country which has been restored after 300 years of extinction were endangered and Czechs became desperate the army might then take over in accordance with popular will under command of present Chief of Staff, General Krejci and with or without assistance of President Benes.

I have in previous telegrams discounted mischievous rumours of military *coup d'état* but they have this amount of foundation that the army is without doubt powerful factor, that its outlook is, as is natural, strongly Czech nationalist, and that the whole nation have now proved to the world that they are not like Austrians prepared to submit tamely to foreign threats. For this reason it is to my mind important to avoid any action which would turn Czechs from their present mood of reason to one of emotion for the result might well be to precipitate the very crisis it is our object to avoid.

My warning is based on intuition rather than on evidence but I see it is borne out by testimony of Czechoslovak Minister in Rome expressed to His Majesty's Ambassador as far back as May 14 when it presumably represented his personal reaction to Anglo-French *démarche* of May 7. If Czechoslovak Minister is the M. Chvalkovsky whom I knew in Berlin he is very far from being a desperate or unreasonable witness (see Lord Perth's private letter of May 14 to Sir A. Cadogan).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this letter Lord Perth reported an informal conversation with the Czechoslovak Minister who expressed views as indicated in the text.

I do not wish to suggest that instructions in your telegram No. 142<sup>2</sup> will bring us to the danger point but the time may be approaching when the fact that such a point probably exists should be borne steadily in mind. But no doubt . . .<sup>3</sup> limiting factors not only on German and Sudeten sides but also on Czech side, and although extremists have been more in evidence so far on the former sides the possibility of their emergence also in Czechoslovakia should not be disregarded.

A sidelight on the above is thrown by M. Bechyne's speech of which I was unaware when this telegram was drafted. (For latter see my immediately following telegram.)<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Rome.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> No. 353.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. M. Bechyne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Railways, in a speech at a Social Democratic meeting had said that the military measures taken by the Government had been absolutely successful; that those who believed the Sudeten German party would be satisfied by concessions were misled, since its appetite was only increased thereby, and that it was impossible to cancel the recent security measures. If necessary the Government would decide on a three years' conscription service. No settlement which threatened the independence of the Republic could be considered.

#### No. 369

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 239 Telegraphic [C 5318/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 3, 1938, 5.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 253,<sup>1</sup> second paragraph.

I must point out that the only public announcement which has been made of the action which we took in Berlin at the week-end May 20-22 was the statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on May 23. This statement was deliberately framed in the most moderate language and contained nothing which anyone in Germany could properly regard as minatory, and nothing that was likely to stiffen Czech resistance. As you will have seen from my despatch No. 836,<sup>2</sup> the German Ambassador himself volunteered the opinion that this statement was admirably objective and that he could not have suggested any alteration in the sense of greater fairness in it.

I think you ought to make these points to the State Secretary if you have not already done so.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 358.

<sup>2</sup> No. 305.

No. 370

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 152 Telegraphic [C 5124/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 3, 1938, 7.30 p.m.

In your telegram No. 247<sup>1</sup> you reported M. Hodza as saying that up to 32,000 men would be released by June 10. In your telegram No. 257<sup>2</sup> you reported him as stating that this total will later be increased to 104,000. It is not clear from the decypher of your telegram No. 257 whether this total will be reached in the *week* following June 10 or only in the following *weeks*. If this total will be reached by June 17 it is clearly important that the German Government should, if the Czechoslovak Government see no objection, be made aware of it.

In any case I do not quite understand why M. Hodza spoke of total of only 104,000. According to the information supplied by your Military Attaché (see my telegram No. 130)<sup>3</sup> the total number called up amounted to about 176,000. If these were all called up on May 21 under paragraph 22 of Defence Act as is stated in your despatch No. 177<sup>4</sup> the total to be released by June 18 should be 176,000. Can you explain this discrepancy?

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 356.

<sup>2</sup> No. 363.

<sup>3</sup> No. 329.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. This despatch of May 25 amplified the information given in No. 272, by analysing the paragraphs of the Defence Act relevant to the call up of certain classes of reservists. 'Paragraph 22' required the release within four weeks of reservists called up for special training.

No. 371

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3, 10.30 p.m.)*

*No. 264 Telegraphic [C 5388/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 3, 1938, 7.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 247<sup>1</sup> second paragraph.

The President of Republic informed me to-day that 49,000 men had already been released.

Though my French colleague was furthermore informed by President of Council that this number would be increased to 138,000 by about June 12 M. Benes confined himself in order to be on the safe side to saying that a further larger number would be disbanded by June 20 provided of course that nothing serious occurred before then. He added that a certain number would probably have to be retained during Sokol Congress which begins about June 20 and ends about July 6.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 356.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton further reported (telegram No. 183 Saving of June 4) that 'at an earlier stage of our conversation the President said that the situation as it existed before military measures were taken could not be allowed to recur. He had agreed to earlier tactics of President of the Council and Minister of the Interior which were designed to avoid any incident with the Sudeten German party but the party had not been loyal and had exploited the indulgence of the Government asserting that the State had lost its authority.'

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 4)*

*No. 172 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5386/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 3, 1938

As regards the last sentence of Berlin telegram No. 252<sup>1</sup> it should be borne in mind that the incidents in the frontier areas which, in view of Germany's attitude, were so serious, occurred before the troops were ever called to the colours and ceased as a result of that measure, temporarily at least. In particular the sinister 'hundred' cases mentioned by the German Minister for Foreign Affairs to Sir Neville Henderson on May 21 and to Your Excellency by the German Ambassador on the following morning occurred, or were alleged to have occurred, on the day preceding the enrolment of the troops.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> No. 352.

No. 373

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 4, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 265 Telegraphic [C 5391/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 3, 1938, 9.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 261.<sup>1</sup>

At audience this afternoon I read to President Benes second and third paragraphs of your telegram No. 142<sup>2</sup> (substituting only for words: 'we must leave M. Benes in no doubt' words: 'it is very important that President and Government should realise betimes that').

President took these representations in good part and asked me to convey to you the following immediate reply regarding two particular points.

First, on behalf of himself and also of Czechoslovak Government he wished to give the most serious assurance that on Czechoslovak side there was no intention to prolong delay or fail to expedite negotiations and decisions. He deemed it essential that His Majesty's Government should know that he and his Government would press on with work loyally, correctly, and very earnestly and finish it as soon as possible. He wished to emphasise their desire for speed because he had heard that German Government suspected Czechoslovak Government of wishing to prolong or postpone decisions in the hope that something might turn up. This was entirely wrong.

His second point related to self-administration. President said he had just received a written statement of Sudeten German requirements and produced from his pocket twelve large size sheets of typewriting. At the end of them

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 2 Mr. Newton reported that he was being received by the President at 1.15 p.m. on June 3.

<sup>2</sup> No. 353.

was a brief mention of a 'Volkstag'. While great majority of their desiderata including local councils could be accepted, principle of separate National Parliaments was not acceptable. With this view Dr. Hodza quite agreed. In reply to my enquiry whether it could not at any rate be discussed he said it could certainly be discussed but it would not be honest if he suggested that it could be accepted. Such a parliament would be incompatible with the constitution, endanger the unity of the country, complicate administration to an extent which would be impracticable and immediately raise most dangerous and delicate question of union of Czechs and Slovaks. In regard to this particular argument I alluded to example of Ruthenia. Dr. Benes said that inhabitants of that comparatively small area were quite different people and, if an independent Ukrainia ever came into existence, would probably be incorporated in the Ukraine but union of Czechs and Slovaks was vital for the existence of a republic which had neighbouring countries with populations of 75 million in the case of Germany and 30 million in the case of Poland. Less than half the Slovaks wanted autonomy but Slovaks were very immature, accessible to German, Polish and Hungarian propaganda and introduction of autonomy in Slovakia would be regarded by Germany, Poland and Hungary as a first step towards disruption of Czechoslovak Republic.

Czechoslovak Government could not accept anything which was designed to split the country up territorially. After only 20 years of existence they could not afford to make experiments along the lines of separatism. Proposal for a National Diet was not an outstanding feature of written statement and he hoped its impracticable nature would be recognised by Sudeten German party. At the beginning of our conversation President had told me of his impression that discussions with Dr. Hodza were beginning to produce realisation on both sides that a satisfactory settlement could be reached and this although they had not got beyond the subject of self-administration to the very large concessions which Government were prepared to make in a number of other matters such as schools, budget allocations, language, percentage of officials and establishment of a special Court for dealing with nationality questions. In such questions Sudeten Germans could obtain almost 100 per cent. of their full desiderata.

At the beginning of our conversation Dr. Benes told me in confidence that in order to eliminate politics as far as possible and expedite elaboration of practical measures the drafting of Nationality Statute would be referred to a committee presided over by jurists of high repute who would command the confidence of Sudeten Germans, Sudeten representatives would be invited to appoint specialists if they so desired for collaboration with this committee and on that day or next day first contact with committee would be established. On this latter point Private Secretary to Minister for Foreign Affairs rang me up while I was drafting this telegram to communicate to me following information which was being telegraphed to Czechoslovak Legations in London and Paris. It was that experts representing both Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten German party had established contact for the



purpose of examining within the spirit of the constitution suggestions presented by Sudeten German representative Herr Kundt.

Further report of three hours' conference follows.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Warsaw, Budapest and Paris.

### No. 374

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 153 Telegraphic [C 5359/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 4, 1938, 11.30 a.m.*

Your telegram No. 259.<sup>1</sup>

I fear that yesterday's leading article<sup>2</sup> in 'The Times' may be misinterpreted by the Czechoslovak Government as representing a change of policy on the part of His Majesty's Government and the abandonment of their efforts to bring about an agreed settlement between the Czechoslovak Government and Herr Henlein on the basis of regional self-administration within the framework of the Czechoslovak State.

You may let it be known, as you think fit, that this is not the case and that the article in no way represents the views of His Majesty's Government.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 368.

<sup>2</sup> This article had discussed the wisdom of allowing 'the Germans of Czechoslovakia—by plebiscite or otherwise—to decide their own future, even if it should mean secession to the Reich', and had advocated applying the same policy to the other minorities inside Czechoslovakia as 'a drastic remedy for the present unrest, but something drastic may be needed'.

### No. 375

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 4, 10.0 p.m.)*

*No. 41 Telegraphic [C 5394/1941/18]*

WARSAW, *June 4, 1938, 4.40 p.m.*

My letter to Sir O. Sargent June 1st.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the unsatisfactory conversation between the French Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Polish Ambassador in Paris regarding the attitude of Poland in the event of hostilities between Germany and Czechoslovakia,

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this letter Sir H. Kennard discussed the probable attitude of Poland, in view of Polish treaty obligations towards France. Sir H. Kennard thought that the Polish Government might claim that, if France became involved in war with Germany as a result of French assistance to Czechoslovakia, a *casus foederis* had not arisen under the Franco-Polish treaty of 1921. M. Noël had told Sir H. Kennard that he had not asked M. Beck directly what the Polish attitude would be in the event of hostilities between Germany and Czechoslovakia, but that Marshal Smigly-Rydz 'had assured him some time ago on his word of honour that Poland would not only honour her alliance with France if she were attacked by Germany but would not attack Czechoslovakia in the event of the latter being at war with Germany'. Marshal Smigly-Rydz had proposed to obtain some confirmation of this assurance from M. Beck, but had not yet done so.

and consequently France, the French Ambassador saw Marshal Smigly-Rydz yesterday and put various direct questions to him recalling more especially the fact that the Marshal had in 1936 given an assurance to General Gamelin that Poland would never range herself against France in any future war. The French Government fully realised, he said, that Poland had no direct obligation to defend Czechoslovakia, and they also understood the difficulty for Poland involved by Russian assistance to Czechoslovakia. But they now wanted to know definitely that in the event of hostilities between Germany and Czechoslovakia, Poland would not take action against the latter on her own account.

Whereas the Marshal had on previous occasions spoken very categorically, he was far more evasive in the conversation of yesterday. The Marshal would not give a definite assurance that Poland would not take any action which might be embarrassing to Czechoslovakia. In fact M. Noël is under the impression that in the event of Germany successfully invading Czechoslovakia it may be expected that Poland would invade Teschen area ostensibly to prevent its falling into German hands. In the event of hostilities assuming a wider scope Poland would maintain her neutrality towards Germany until she saw the probable outcome and would then take whatever side might be best suited to serve her own interests.

My French colleague is under the impression that the German Ambassador here asked the Polish Government whether the German Government could count on Poland's neutrality in the event of hostilities between Germany and Czechoslovakia, but received an equally evasive reply. I have been unable to elicit any information on this subject from the German Embassy. I may mention that my Military Attaché recently made an extensive tour along the Polish frontier and has seen no signs of extraordinary Polish military concentration with the exception of the fact that mechanised forces seem to have been largely reinforced in Cracow area and some formations made more mobile.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 376

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5)*

*No. 267 Telegraphic [C 5389/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 4, 1938

Your telegram No. 152.<sup>1</sup>

Message reported in my telegram No. 257<sup>2</sup> was that a total of 104,000 would be released in one week following June 10.

That information has however now been superseded by my telegram No. 264<sup>3</sup> from which you will see that it is apparently the intention of the Czechoslovak Government to retain some of the reservists with the colours until at

<sup>1</sup> No. 370.

<sup>2</sup> No. 363.

<sup>3</sup> No. 371.

any rate after first week of July. This would not be covered by paragraph of the Defence Act under which the reservists were actually called up. On the other hand section 1 of paragraph 22 provides for a total period of fourteen weeks' training for reservists so it may be that some of those called up for four weeks' special training on May 21 could be retained for normal training beyond that period.

[? Military Attaché] was informed by General Staff this morning that all road-posts which are one of the principal sources of provocation have now been removed. (He hopes to verify this during the week-end.)

General Staff cannot give him detailed figures of disbandment of reservists before Tuesday. When he receives these he will endeavour to clear up legal point as to whether those reservists already called up can be retained beyond four weeks.

Please inform War Office and Air Ministry.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

### No. 377

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)*

*No. 185 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5557/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 4, 1938

My telegram 265.<sup>1</sup>

As a further objection to National Parliaments, the President mentioned that such an institution might one day declare the independence of the nationality concerned.

At another stage in our conversation he mentioned to me that Sudeten German party wanted duplicate local councils for such matters as school administration even in small parishes so as to abolish mixed councils and divide them into purely German and purely Czech. This proposal could be discussed by experts' committee but M. Benes said it was . . .<sup>2</sup> impracticable as Sudeten Germans would he hoped realise when they got down to detailed consideration.

At some other stage the President observed that almost everything could be given to Sudeten Germans which would not be incompatible with the unity of the State. I imagine therefore that he felt the above mentioned proposal to be an instance of a tendency which must be resisted to disentangle German nationality from the others as much as possible. Precisely because disentanglement is likely to be a Sudeten aim I fear it may be doubtful whether experts' committee will be able to overcome divisions of opinion on such points.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 373.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 8)*

*No. 272 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5518/1941/13]*

BERLIN, June 6, 1938

Mr. Newton has drawn attention in his telegram No. 259<sup>1</sup> to risk of pressing Czechoslovak Government too hard and has suggested that such a point might be reached if demand for plebiscite were raised.

2. Sympathy of everyone for Czechs in their present dilemma must be taken for granted. Yet if plebiscite—outcome of which would be foregone conclusion—is to be averted is there any conceivable alternative between (a) widest possible autonomy and (b) the perpetuation of a situation in which risk of war remains a constant menace?

3. German attitude today is a form of blackmail and I would sum up the views not only of the Government but of the mass of the German people including those hostile to the régime as follows:—

(1) The Sudeten Germans are entitled to self-determination.

(2) If Great Britain and France desire a pacific settlement, it is up to them to compel Dr. Benes to make the necessary concession. The Western Powers have always argued that German methods are reprehensible and that revisions of the Versailles Treaty should be achieved by negotiation rather than by force. They have today an opportunity of proving their contention.

(3) So far however despite a month's pressure the Czechoslovak Government has given no practical and tangible proof of their willingness to bring about a comprehensive and generous solution. Developments hitherto consequently tend to prove that Herr Hitler is right in his view that the method of negotiation in big issues produces no results.

(4) Czechoslovak Government relying on foreign support do not in fact intend to make a satisfactory offer. Talk of Nationality Statute is a bluff and in the end, so Germans believe, Dr. Benes will merely put forward proposals which though actually inadequate will be sufficiently plausible to win British support.

(5) In the last resort Germany is entitled to protect the Sudeten Germans and to secure for them the rights which the Czechoslovak Government is evidently determined to withhold.

4. As I see it, my rôle here is to urge patience and moderation on the German Government and to convince them of British sincerity and of the determination of His Majesty's Government to secure a comprehensive solution and to see that justice is secured for all parties.

5. Much as I reprehend the polemics and propaganda of the German press, which I have done my utmost to restrain, I can but realise that my efforts stand no chance of success so long as there are no practical results to show for our action at Prague. The one unanswerable and definite advance

<sup>1</sup> No. 368.

to which I have so far been able to point has been acceptance of Henlein as the Sudeten leader and willingness of Czech Government to negotiate with him. Reference to promised Nationality Statute does not carry conviction nor—though they are helpful—do statements regarding partial disbandment of reserves, for the calling up of which Germans argue that there was never any justification and which should consequently have at once been disbanded once the rumours of German troop concentrations proved inexact. German argument, indeed, is that situation has deteriorated during the past month of Anglo-French pressure in view of Czech semi-mobilization and threat of three years' service. Nor will mention of retention of an unspecified number of reserves for Sokol Congress in July be likely to provoke anything but increased suspicion.

6. Attitude of Germans is unreasonable but it is as stated above and would be even more so if it were not for a reluctant but still persistent belief in British sincerity. That belief is however a diminishing asset and dependent on progress at Prague.

7. It would clearly be unjust to blame the Czechs only for these delays. At the same time it would appear that both they and Henlein party are at present sparring for an opening and waiting upon each other to show their hand: the one to see how much can be asked for and the other to see how little need be offered. It is difficult otherwise to understand why the Nationality Statute has not yet been shown to Henlein Party leaders. Yet delay is dangerous and I fear that the situation will again deteriorate if, after this Whitsuntide lull and the elections next Sunday, there is still nothing concrete to show as the result of our efforts at Prague. Every young Sudeten between the age of 20–30 is a rabid Nazi and merely looking for an excuse—just as Hitler's extremists are—to engineer a serious incident, possibly even despite the wishes of their leaders. The essential point seems to me therefore to be to forestall any such excuse.

8. So far as the military position here is concerned it continues to be impossible to discover any evidence of special military preparations. This is the normal season for training of reserves and troop movements and in addition there are certain abnormal but natural exchanges of units as between Austria and the Reich. The task of discovering anything abnormal is consequently unusually difficult. Nevertheless my impression—though principally based on instinct and one's knowledge of the German mind—is that the German War Office is quietly and unobtrusively getting everything as ready as possible against all eventualities. My Military Attaché agrees with the above and it would in any case be unwise to imagine anything else. If the Czechs feel the same I fear they may regard it as justification for further postponing the disbandment of their reserves.

9. The fact is that the circle is a vicious one with everyone distrusting everyone else. Many Germans, for instance,—and State Secretary hinted as much to me recently—even believe that His Majesty's Government would not be averse to a preventive war. All the rumours which are bandied about may be described as malicious, and may possibly be so, but they are essentially



evidence of a psychosis, not only on both sides of the frontier but in Europe generally, which, if prolonged, may end tragically.

10. German Government will never recommend Henlein to negotiate on less than the Karlsbad programme and after the latter's visit to London I doubt if it would be wise to urge them to do so, lest Henlein's position be thereby undermined and he be replaced by Krebs or some other extremist. The vicious circle can in my opinion therefore only be broken by Dr. Benes and if the Czechs do not wish for either a plebiscite or war, their best course would surely be to take the autonomy bull by the horns at the earliest possible moment. Might it not, for instance, be useful for the Czech Government to announce publicly that they had decided to negotiate on the basis of the Karlsbad speech combined with the Nationality Statute? Be this as it may and unpalatable though such pressure must be, is not the best service which we and the French can render not only to the world in general but to the Czechs themselves, to continue to urge the latter relentlessly in the direction of the widest possible autonomy?

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 379

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 8)*

*No. 270 Telegraphic [C 5554/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 7, 1938

My telegrams Nos. 264<sup>1</sup> and 265<sup>2</sup>.

Military Attaché was informed to-day by General Staff that about 50,000 men had now been released (President of Council a day or two previously gave a figure of 49,000 to Mr. Ward Price which has now been published in the 'Daily Mail' and reproduced in the press here). Others, but not in great numbers would be released during the present week and remainder on completion of their 28 days' training. It was not at present the intention at the end of 28 days to call up reservists to replace those released except for normal contingent who would ordinarily be coming up for their annual training.

Reservists specially called up for air force and anti-aircraft regiments would remain under arms until after the elections on June 12 as also State defence guard.

Military Attaché was also informed that reservists could not be legally required to remain with the colours beyond 28 days.

The only way round that difficulty would be to call up fresh men but that was not the present intention.

Please inform War Office and Air Ministry.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 371.

<sup>2</sup> No. 373.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Strang (Received June 10)*  
[C 5631/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *June 7, 1938*

My dear Strang,

Many thanks for the memorandum summing up your impressions of your useful visits to Prague and Berlin.

My only comment on your Berlin record is that I feel that you have still over-estimated even the possible danger of a German military 'coup' a fortnight ago.<sup>1</sup> I should like to think that it really existed and that one helped to prevent it. But in all honesty I do not believe that it ever really did: though I thought it did at first.

In this connection I enclose a minute which I received to-day from Mason-MacFarlane which describes the position in the same terms as I reported in my telegram No. 272 Saving<sup>2</sup> of yesterday which Forbes took with him.

I may be wrong but I still believe that Hitler wants a peaceful solution today (what he may want in a year or two's time is another question) and that the last thing that he wishes is a bloody affray which might force his hand and lead to unforeseeable consequences. The German attitude is one of blackmail—to get now through us as much as they can. The danger of it lies in its anti-Czech more than in its anti-British propaganda. The latter has indeed died down in the last week. What I still fear is that 'bloody affray' and that is why I am in such a hurry for Benes to get a move on and to be as generous as possible. Whether any settlement can be permanent is doubtful, but certainly none can be so unless it is as wide as can be.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Newton.

Yrs. ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>1</sup> From the evidence at their disposition the Foreign Office did not agree with the views of Sir N. Henderson or of the Military Attaché on this point.

<sup>2</sup> No. 378.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 380

BERLIN, *June 7, 1938*

The Ambassador.

In spite of the lack of evidence of any definite military preparations in Germany against Czechoslovakia, we can naturally assume with absolute certainty that the German General Staff have their plans prepared for every eventuality. They would be running entirely untrue to form if they had not. And we can be equally sure that everything possible is being done to ensure rapid and complete mobilisation if necessary.

I consider that it is perfectly probable that minor troop movements may have taken place, and that in certain units there may be a state of preparedness, but I can only say that evidence to this effect is of the scantiest.

2. As far as reliable information at my disposal goes, I can discover no

signs of anything indicating any *immediate* intention to take military action against Czechoslovakia. I have moreover had no information from unbiased or sure sources since before the recent 'crisis' to indicate any such definite intention. The 'crisis' appears to have been due to two causes. Firstly, the fact that it suddenly became probable that the maltreatment of Sudeten by Czechs had become sufficiently serious to make Hitler take military action. Secondly, the fact that this probability led many people, and above all the Czech General Staff, to place the most sinister construction upon the numerous reports of troop movements in Germany which cannot fail to have been received at this time. Apart from other reasons there are many abnormal moves going on owing to the upset of the normal training moves by foot and mouth disease difficulties.

3. During the Whitsun week-end I have had information from sources upon which I can fully rely, that in Saxony in the Rhineland and in East Prussia, there are no signs whatever of any military operation being staged. Major Strong<sup>1</sup> has just returned from the area Weimar-Erfurt-Gera-Zeitz, and reports everything normal, with one possible exception, and Whitsun leave conditions everywhere.

Berlin has been full of soldiers on leave from units all over the country during the past few days. I have personally met officers from three Regiments on the Saxon-Czechoslovakian border, who have told me that most of their officers and many of their men have been away for Whitsun.

4. There is nothing to indicate that the Germans are surreptitiously staging a military operation against Czechoslovakia of the type which they would have to undertake should such action be almost certain to provoke intervention by France. I see no reason to alter my opinions expressed in my memorandum No. 234<sup>2</sup> dated 25th May, 1938, to the War Office, of which Your Excellency has a copy.

But so long as the Sudeten problem remains unsolved, we can never be quite certain that Hitler might not be tempted or even driven to indulge in another gamble of the Austrian type. If he accepts the advice of his Army Command he will only do this if he feels that the Czech attitude has been so uncompromising as to make it unlikely that France will still feel in honour bound to intervene. The danger lies in the fact that the longer Prague delays, the greater becomes the possibility that Hitler may be induced to take military action, which although intended to be nothing more than 'police action', might well lead to the gravest results, if, for once, his appreciation of French reactions should prove false.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE, Colonel,  
*Military Attaché*

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Military Attaché at Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is uncertain. Possibly No. 316.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 8, 12.25 p.m.)*  
*No. 177 Telegraphic [C 5531/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 8, 10.55 a.m.

French Ambassador Berlin who returns there this evening tells me that he intends in course of conversation with Herr Hitler to make purely personal suggestion that France, Great Britain and Germany should discuss together Czechoslovak problem with a view to reaching a fair solution thereof by agreement. That solution they would then recommend Czechoslovak Government to accept.

I did not give His Excellency any reason to believe His Majesty's Government would agree to such tripartite conversations but I remarked that they would surely not appeal to Herr Hitler on a question which he considers to be primarily a German concern. M. François-Poncet thinks however that suggestion if put forward as a personal one of his own and mentioned casually in the course of conversation might be worth making.

The Ambassador seems to have in mind a plan for eventual neutralization of Czechoslovakia under a guarantee by the three above mentioned Powers. This might, he thinks, suit Herr Hitler for it would imply the annulment of Czechoslovakia's pact with Russia (and presumably, though he did not say so, with France). His Excellency must have been considering the possibility of some such plan for some time past, for he tells me he remarked to Herr von Ribbentrop during recent crisis that Czechoslovakia should serve as a bridge and not as a barrier between France and Germany. Herr von Ribbentrop as usual, however, had not seemed to take in what he meant. The idea may possibly appeal to M. Bonnet as giving France a chance of freeing herself from embarrassing and even dangerous bonds that now tie her alone to Czechoslovakia.

M. François-Poncet unlike permanent officials at Quai d'Orsay does not trust M. Benes, nor does he believe latter intends to make any offer likely to satisfy Germans.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 8, 9.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 276 Telegraphic [C 5579/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 8, 7.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 265.<sup>1</sup>

I met Dr. Hodza yesterday evening by chance as he was walking away from his office and enquired how Sudeten negotiations were progressing. He told me that they were proceeding at that moment in Experts Committee between Dr. Hacha and Dr. Schicketanz. He hoped there would be some

<sup>1</sup> No. 373.

means of getting round difficulty of a National Diet and intended to press on with negotiations so that Nationalities Statute could be introduced into Parliament without delay. Dr. Hodza expected to be able to give me more definite information in the next two or three days.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

### No. 383

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 249 Telegraphic [C 5518/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 8, 1938, 9.00 p.m.

Your telegram No. 272 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

1. I agree generally with your appreciation of the situation, and as you will see from my telegram to Prague No. 157<sup>2</sup> I am authorising His Majesty's Minister to give to M. Benes the substance of those portions of your telegram under reference which he considers suitable.

2. I am not sure, from your references to the Carlsbad programme in paragraph 10 of your telegram, whether you have overlooked the fact that Herr Henlein's representatives are apparently at present basing themselves on something less than the Carlsbad programme. You will have seen from my telegrams to Prague No. 84 and No. 85<sup>3</sup> (of May 16) that when he was in London, Herr Henlein seemed disposed not to insist on three of the items on the Carlsbad programme; and you will have seen from my telegram to Prague No. 142<sup>4</sup> (of May 31) that these three points apparently do not figure in the proposals put forward by the Henlein representatives to Dr. Hodza on May 30. The main purpose of His Majesty's Minister's latest conversation with President Benes (see my telegram to Prague No. 142 and Prague telegram No. 265<sup>5</sup>) was to bring home to the Czechoslovak Government the necessity of accepting this modified Carlsbad programme as a basis of discussion.

Repeated to Prague No. 158, Paris No. 139 Saving.

<sup>1</sup> No. 378.

<sup>2</sup> No. 384.

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 219 and 220.

<sup>4</sup> No. 353.

<sup>5</sup> No. 373.

### No. 384

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 157 Telegraphic [C 5391/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 8, 1938, 10 p.m.

I have received your telegram No. 265<sup>1</sup> and subsequent telegrams, reporting on your audience with President Benes on June 3, and I entirely approve the manner in which you handled the conversation.

2. I am, however, impressed by the necessity of keeping up pressure on

<sup>1</sup> No. 373.



the Czechoslovak Government during these critical days for the reasons set forth in Berlin telegram No. 272 Saving.<sup>2</sup>

3. I wish you, therefore, to ask for a further audience of President Benes towards the end of the present week. You should say that you have been instructed to ask what progress has been made in the contacts between the Government and the Sudeten German representatives, and as an explanation of the anxiety felt by His Majesty's Government on this point, you are authorised if you see fit to give him the substance of those portions of Berlin telegram No. 272 Saving, which you consider suitable as presenting the picture from the Berlin end as it appears to His Majesty's Ambassador.

4. Unless concrete progress can be made at a very early date, the Czechoslovak Government may well find themselves faced with Herr Krebs, or some other extremist, instead of the more moderate Henlein.<sup>3</sup> If the situation is to be saved and a peaceful settlement to be secured, it seems to me essential that Herr Henlein should be given something substantial to show in the very near future.

5. You might at the same time take an opportunity of expressing the view that the Czechoslovak Government cannot afford to close their minds entirely to the possibility of agreeing to a 'Volkstag'. If the functions of a 'Volkstag' could be satisfactorily limited and defined, they need surely not be afraid of the mere name.

6. Meanwhile, has your French colleague seen M. Benes and carried out the instructions which, according to Paris telegram No. 169,<sup>4</sup> were sent to him last week?

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 378.

<sup>3</sup> This view was repeated on June 10 to Mr. Newton in a telegram (No. 165) stating that Herr Krebs was 'trying by every possible means to oust Herr Henlein from the leadership and to drive him off his moderate policy'.

<sup>4</sup> No. 357.

## No. 385

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 916 [C 5577/42/18]*

Sir,

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 8, 1938

The German Ambassador asked to see me to-day, and, after some discussion of the Czechoslovak question, the conversation passed to more general topics, in the course of which I assured his Excellency that this country continually desired to establish friendly relations with Germany, a feeling which he said was reciprocated on the German side. We had a little discussion as to what progress might be found possible in this direction, during which I told the Ambassador that I thought, if it were ever possible to reach any agreement upon disarmament, this would be of all steps the one to be most warmly welcomed by British opinion. The Ambassador said that he had given some thought to such possibilities, and it had occurred to him to

wonder whether, if a general scheme was not immediately practicable, it might be possible to make an agreement between Germany and Great Britain which should come into force as soon as certain other countries expressed their willingness to adhere to it. I told his Excellency the suggestion was interesting and I would bear it in mind. He said that the tragedy of the last few years had been that when one side had advanced the other had drawn back and *vice versa*, and that we were inclined to forget the solid contributions that Germany had made to European peace by her arrangement with Belgium, the renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, her arrangement with Poland and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. These were things that might rightly be brought into the account on the credit side of Germany. The Ambassador was convinced that the German Chancellor still wanted an understanding with Great Britain, but he had no doubt felt that we had been slow to appreciate the efforts that in all sincerity he had made to this end.

2. The whole conversation was very friendly, and the Ambassador was frankly outspoken about Herr von Ribbentrop's career as his predecessor here. The latter recognised that he had been a failure, but bore no particular resentment on this account. His trouble had been that he had always felt obliged to keep one eye so much on the German end that he had prejudiced his chances of doing much continuous work in England. None the less, he still wished to establish close relations between our two countries. I told the Ambassador that I thought our frank exchange of views had been of great value, and said that whenever he felt it might be useful to have a further talk, I should hold myself entirely at his disposal.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 386

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 917 [C 5578/1941/18]*

Sir,

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 8, 1938*

The German Ambassador asked to see me to-day, and said that he had done so because he thought it would be helpful if we had a general exchange of views on recent events. He also felt that it would be possible for him to give me the background of the recent press attacks on Great Britain and of German opinion generally.

2. His Excellency began by saying that our Government and the German Government seemed in complete agreement on the two points of fundamental importance, namely, first, that we both desired to reach a settlement of the Czechoslovak problem by peaceful means; and, secondly, that the German Government had welcomed the *démarche* of His Majesty's Government in acting as quasi-mediator in the matter at Prague.

3. But there had been wide resentment in Germany at the general assumption that had been made in this country as elsewhere that the responsibility for the tension of three weeks ago was principally to be placed upon German

shoulders. There had been no justification for this, and, accordingly, German opinion had reacted unfavourably to the warnings delivered and strong language used which ought, in the German view, to have been rather addressed to Prague than to Berlin. This feeling had been reinforced by reports that had reached Berlin as to French enquiries being made, certainly at Warsaw and Moscow, and, though of this the German Government were not certain, at Bucharest and Washington, as to the attitude that would be adopted in these several capitals if the Germans crossed the Czechoslovak frontier. All these things arose from and contributed to the creation of an impression that in the whole matter the Germans had been principally to blame, and this was unfounded and unjust.

4. There was one particular point which he was instructed by his Government to put to me. The German Government had hitherto believed that the French treaty with Czechoslovakia would only operate in the case of unprovoked aggression by Germany on Czechoslovakia. In spite of this they had derived the impression from recent events that it was the French intention to go to war if the Germans entered Czechoslovakia, however great had been the provocation. The Ambassador said that he would be grateful for anything I felt able to say on this point. Finally, the Ambassador said that there were two matters now principally causing concern in Germany. One was a fear lest the pressure placed on the Czechoslovak Government by the French and British Governments should have been in effect neutralised by the promise of support in all circumstances to which he had just alluded, and, secondly, a fear lest now that, as he put it, the tension was more or less over and things were quieter, the Czechoslovak Government might be concerned only to play for time, with the result that not much would in fact be done.

5. I told his Excellency that, in regard to the particular point that he had put to me under instructions from his Government, I had not the treaty before me and was not sufficiently familiar with its terms to speak securely of it without refreshing my memory. Nor did I suppose that, even if it spoke of unprovoked aggression, it was possible to establish any precise measure of provocation that might in hypothetical circumstances be held to justify invasion. The essential point seemed to me rather to be that anything in the nature of what we might call incidents should clearly be capable of solution by other methods than resort to force, and that I could not conceive any such resort to force as being generally held justified on any account by world opinion unless and until every other remedy had been tried and had failed. No doubt the question of provocation was one on which there would always be two opinions, and it was difficult for those not immediately concerned to judge except upon the report of some impartial enquiry. In this case all that His Majesty's Government had been concerned to point out, as I felt bound to remind his Excellency, was that, whatever might be at any stage the German views, the fact did remain that, in all the circumstances, there was a real danger of a general war resulting from any precipitate action that might on either side be taken. It was this danger that we had been concerned to try to avoid.

6. For the rest, I told the Ambassador that I quite understood the German reactions on the assumptions that he had stated to me. None the less I did not think it was at all surprising that the anxieties of three weeks ago had been so suddenly excited. The reports of German troop movements, whatever these movements had been, had followed on an intensive press campaign about Czechoslovakia and on the delivery of certain speeches in Germany, and finally the course of events in Austria was fresh in everybody's mind. His Majesty's Government had been only concerned, as they were to-day, to encourage the search for and, we hoped, the finding of an agreed and reasonable solution, and this we had every reason to hope could be achieved, provided patience were exercised on both sides. I knew nothing about the French enquiries in the several capitals that he had mentioned, and, if I might presume to say so, I thought that the constructive work before us was rather to press on with the attempt to get the matter settled than go back to the apportionment of blame for what was now passed. It was for this reason that I regretted, even if I understood his explanation of it, the attacks on this country by the German press. The British press, on the whole, had not sought to make polemic reply, and I was myself disposed to think that only damage could result from this kind of war of words. I could give his Excellency the most explicit assurances that we had in no sense given to the Czechoslovak Government what might be termed a blank cheque to do what they liked now that the immediate crisis had been passed, and, indeed, if I felt at liberty to tell him of everything that had passed between us and Prague, he would, I was quite certain, recognise that, both in regard to possible incidents and in regard to the constitutional side of the Sudeten-deutsch question, all our efforts at Prague had been directed to impressing upon the Czechoslovak Government the desirability of using all their efforts both to avoid incidents and to reach a constitutional settlement. I was also satisfied that the Czechoslovak Government were concerned to do their best in both these respects. I hoped that the Ambassador would give this assurance as strongly as he could to his Government and assure them further that we should not relax our efforts in this direction. But, if these efforts were to be successful, I would earnestly hope that the German Government would also be prepared from their side to lend them such support as they might feel able to do. The Ambassador said he was glad to learn what I had told him, but he feared that, though Dr. Hodza was personally doing all he could, his efforts were still likely to be blocked in other quarters. Dr. Hodza had indeed said as much to some of the Sudeten German representatives.

7. I told the Ambassador that I thought that his Government ought to give credit to the Czechoslovak Government for what they had done in the matter of disbandment of troops, in regard to which he had spoken to me at our previous interview. He would be aware that, since the 28th May, Czechoslovak troops had been withdrawn from the frontier, aircraft were forbidden to fly within 10 kilom. of the frontier, Dr. Benes had told our Minister on the 3rd June that 49,000 men had already been released and that a further large number would be disbanded by the 20th June, provided

nothing serious occurred. The Ambassador said that he thought this was substantial progress.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 387

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 250 Telegraphic [C 5531/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 9, 1938, 6.00 p.m.*

Paris telegram No. 177.<sup>1</sup>

I think it would be as well that you should discourage the French Ambassador from suggesting to Herr Hitler, even in a purely personal capacity, that the Czechoslovak problem should be settled by means of direct negotiations between France, Great Britain and Germany. Any such suggestion at the present juncture would be most inopportune in view of the negotiations now proceeding between Herr Henlein and Dr. Benes.

Similarly, I hope the Ambassador will not canvass any plan of neutralisation which would require Great Britain to guarantee Czechoslovakia. This might lead to misunderstandings.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 381.

No. 388

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 10, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 263 Telegraphic [C 5628/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *June 9, 7.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 249.<sup>1</sup>

I had not overlooked point made in paragraph 2 and my reference to 'after Henlein's visit to London' was intended to refer to this.

One of the reasons for delay seems to be that there is as yet no basis of appeal. Nationality Statute has not been shown to Sudeten leaders and we do not know whether they will accept it as such. We know however that they and the German Government will accept the Carlsbad programme. Would not the Czechoslovak Government be well advised to take the wind out of the German sails by announcing publicly that they would agree to negotiate on *basis* of Carlsbad programme? This would not commit them to accepting the whole programme whilst Henlein would be in a better position to show moderation if his programme were the basis rather than a Czech draft which his followers view with suspicion.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 383.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 10, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 282 Telegraphic [C 5629/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 9, 1938, 9.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 157.<sup>1</sup>

My French colleague saw President of the Republic yesterday June 8 and President of the Council last Sunday. Main objects of his visits were to impress on them the urgency of settlement and to enquire how negotiations stood.

Dr. Benes seems to have replied much as he did to me on June 3, making it clear however that communal and district councils could be granted wider powers than at present even if this would mean sacrificing interests of Czech residents. President was emphatic that a National Diet could not be accepted and not for nominal reasons but on the contrary for what lay behind the demand in substance. It might indeed not be practicable at all, as is apparently contemplated, for a Diet representing only persons of a certain nationality wherever resident in the Republic to exercise powers, and probably very far-reaching powers, in a particular area containing many residents of other nationalities. If such a novel system were practicable, the aim could only be to create a distinct Volksgruppe organised and governed on National Socialist lines. French Minister himself believes every kind of National Socialist institutions would be introduced by a German Diet, e.g. such as would correspond to Herr Hitler's Youth, Labour Service Corps, Paramilitary formations, etc.

French Minister's instructions from Paris were to the effect that French Government were not sufficiently informed of the true nature of Herr Henlein's proposals to express so definite an opinion that they were on acceptable basis as that formed by His Majesty's Government. At the same time and in a general way it seemed to them incontestable that negotiations must be pressed to a conclusion in a spirit largely of conciliation. French Minister was therefore instructed to obtain further information on Herr Henlein's proposals with a view to seconding, if there were grounds (*s'il y a lieu*), action of his British colleague by any *démarche* which seemed to him appropriate. M. de Lacroix pointed out to me in conclusion that he would continue to pursue his enquiries regarding negotiations and to urge speed but he evidently doubted whether impressions left by Herr Henlein in London particularly in the matter of National Socialism corresponded to intentions of Sudeten Party as likely to be (? impose)<sup>2</sup> in Czechoslovakia. I have expressed similar misgivings in my telegram No. 269.<sup>3</sup>

As my French colleague was very frank in revealing his instructions and actions neither of which go as far as was indicated to His Majesty's Ambassa-

<sup>1</sup> No. 384.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 7 Mr. Newton gave his opinion that, 'even if the question of Weltanschauung did not figure in the written proposals submitted by Herr Henlein's party, it would be rash to regard it as eliminated'.

dor in Paris at the time of his telegram No. 169<sup>4</sup> (No. 179<sup>5</sup> I have not received) I trust nothing will be said as a result in London or Paris which might be embarrassing to him or his Government.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>4</sup> No. 357.

<sup>5</sup> This number is incorrect. The reference may possibly be to Paris telegram 177, i.e. No. 381 above.

### No. 390

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 10)*

*No. 369 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5627/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 9, 1938

M. de Brinon (see my telegram No. 144)<sup>1</sup> called on a member of my staff today to say that on June 8 M. Bonnet had (? instructed)<sup>2</sup> my Czechoslovak colleague to return at once to Prague to get details of President Benes's intentions as regards Henlein, since so far, in spite of repeated efforts, he had been unable to ascertain exactly what M. Benes meant to offer. M. de Brinon, who is closely connected with M. Daladier, stated that the latter is rapidly losing patience with M. Benes.

Czechoslovakian Legation, with whom I have been indirectly in touch, affirmed that though M. Osusky is not at home, he is nevertheless still in Paris.<sup>3</sup>

Repeated to Rome, Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 241.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> On June 10 Sir E. Phipps reported that M. Osusky had left for Prague on the previous night.

### No. 391

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 10, 3.40 p.m.)*

*No 264 Telegraphic [C 5674/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 10, 1938, 1.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 250.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador came to see me yesterday on his return from Paris and ventilated ideas reported in Sir E. Phipps's telegram No. 177<sup>2</sup> as well as suggestion that in the event of deadlock we might propose to the German Government appointment of a British, French, German, Czech and Sudeten Commission to seek a solution.

I expressed opinion to Ambassador that German Government would never accept latter proposal since it would in fact imply British arbitration in the matter which the German Government affect to regard as no concern of foreign Powers and I was also thoroughly discouraging as regards a

<sup>1</sup> No. 387.

<sup>2</sup> No. 381.

Franco-British-German negotiation or any interference at this stage in Benes-Henlein negotiations. I told His Excellency that in my opinion we had got to leave these two to thresh the matter out between themselves and hope for the best. If it came to the worst and there was insuperable deadlock I intended to propose to His Majesty's Government that they would instruct me alone to seek secret interview with Herr Hitler with a view to endeavouring to find compromise which French Government in their turn would impose on M. Benes and the German Government on Henlein. Nevertheless I hoped from the bottom of my heart that it would not come to this since such a task would be a most invidious one. Nevertheless, I felt that in secrecy and direct appeal would lie only possible hope of successful outcome.

I also expressed myself as uncompromisingly opposed to any British guarantee to Czechoslovakia and opinion that the utmost His Majesty's Government might possibly agree to would be to witness—together with Italy—a Franco-German guarantee. Personally I disliked even to go as far as that.

When I next see the French Ambassador I shall reinforce what I have already said to him on your authority.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 392

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 10, 7.50 p.m.)*  
*No. 284 Telegraphic [C 5688/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 10, 1938, 5.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 278.<sup>1</sup>

1. Official communiqué has been published stating that representatives of Sudeten German party laid before President of the Council proposals for solution of nationality problems in the State. The plan was subject of examination by experts.

2. The 'Prager Tageblatt' adds that Sudeten German memorandum was immediately after its receipt handed to chief Government expert Dr. Hacha for study. Yesterday Political Committee of Cabinet held meeting to which Dr. Hacha was summoned and he gave detailed report upon Sudeten German proposals from constitutional legislative and administrative point of view. Dr. Hodza also received a delegation of Sudeten German party during the day but it was agreed to maintain greatest discretion as to their conversation.

3. In journalistic sources which may be well informed it is said that Dr. Kundt's letter to Dr. Hodza of June 8 was in the nature of a retort to Government proposal to introduce three years' military service. It was sent in the expectation and indeed probably the hope that Dr. Hodza would reply with a refusal to negotiate on basis of Carlsbad speech; a further letter had in fact

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of June 9 reported that according to the Sudeten German party's press bureau, Herr Kundt had communicated to Dr. Hodza a memorandum summarizing the Sudeten German demands on the basis of Herr Henlein's eight Carlsbad points.

already been drafted in answer to expected refusal and was in process of being translated into four languages. Its contents were unknown to my informants but their impression is that a demand for a plebiscite even if not contained in document itself will shortly be made and possibly a serious incident staged in preparation for it (compare demand for autonomy which immediately followed the Teplitz incident last October, see my despatch No. 303 of October 19).

4. From a journalistic source in touch with Government I learn that latter have deliberately refrained from showing Nationalities Statute to Sudeten German party until after elections lest it should be made an election issue.

5. While I cannot vouch for the accuracy of these stories they seem to me sufficiently plausible to report in confidence. I may make some confidential allusion to them when I next see Dr. Benes or Dr. Hodza.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

### No. 393

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 11)*

*No. 286 Telegraphic [C 5693/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 10, 1938

My telegram No. 283.<sup>1</sup>

1. Chief of the General Staff yesterday asked Military Attaché to convey a personal request to our General Staff to exercise their influence with Foreign Office not to put pressure on Czechoslovak Government to reduce number of men now serving in the army or to require explanations for every military measure taken in the interests of Czechoslovak security. He said Czechs were most grateful for His Majesty's Government's recent timely intervention and were naturally always bound to give most serious consideration to our advice. That was why he did not wish this advice to take a form which might imperil Czechoslovak military security. As His Majesty's Government might not perhaps appreciate that it was a purely military problem he hoped that our General Staff would explain position.

2. General Krejci made following points:—

(1) There was good reason to believe that Germany might make war on Czechoslovakia at any really propitious moment. The summer collective training exercises in Germany would necessitate considerable troop concentrations and German army which was permanently at nearly war strength could with its excellent communications and motorised equipment bring these troops to Czech frontiers in a matter of hours.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported discussion in the press on a possible prolongation of military service to three years, and an officially inspired statement of June 9 that the Government had not yet reached any decision on the matter. Mr. Newton added: 'I learn from a reliable source that originally press articles were inspired by the Government for the purpose of testing reactions at home and abroad to the proposal. I also understand that despite unfavourable reaction in Germany and also I believe amongst Sudeten Germans the Government intend to go forward with the proposal.'

(2) The Sokol display of 1938 at which many reservists would participate (?and) which would congest communications would be a critical period.

(3) As German army was maintained at nearly war strength there should be no call for anyone to protest if Czechoslovak army whose peace strength was very much below war strength called up only one class of reservists.

(4) Strength of Czechoslovak standing army was inadequate in view of length of frontiers; moreover the recently constructed fortifications must be manned. It was now imperative to increase army to bare minimum required to ensure Czechoslovakia against surprise. When Parliament met legislation would be introduced to extend period of conscript service from 2 years to 3. To bridge the gap between June 18 (when those called up on May 20 were due for discharge) and the time when the new law would provide effectives required it was proposed to call up on June 19 the reservists who would normally come up for annual training in September (about 40,000).

3. Military Attaché expressed his opinion that any diplomatic pressure to disband reservists called up in May was prompted by desire to remove a possible source of disquiet in minority areas but no one wished to see Czechs weaken themselves dangerously. General Krejci replied that Sudeten Germans had been restive since May 20 and that Czechs alone were responsible for maintenance of internal order.

4. Full record of conversation and memorandum<sup>2</sup> handed to Military Attaché by Chief of General Staff to follow by bag. I am sending comments by separate telegram.<sup>3</sup>

Please repeat to War Office, and Air Ministry.

Repeated to Berlin. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> See No. 400.

### No. 394

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 11)*  
*No. 287 Telegraphic [C 5691/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 10, 1938

Secretary of German Legation called at His Majesty's Legation today to enquire about the appointment of British observers.<sup>1</sup> He was given information authorized in your telegram No. 193<sup>2</sup> to Paris.

He then proceeded to express personal view that danger of incidents would increase as troops were withdrawn. His impression was that local Czech population was greatly puffed up with recent successes of Czech policy and would treat German population accordingly as soon as troops were gone. Germans on their side would then react and it was only too possible blood would be shed especially if, as he believed, Czech population was armed. And if blood was shed again he would not care to predict results. Only hope in his

<sup>1</sup> For this appointment see No. 349, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 9, Sir E. Phipps was instructed to notify the French Government of the appointment of British observers. Sir N. Henderson was sent similar instructions at the same time.



opinion was speedy conclusion of negotiations between Henlein party and the Government and offer by the latter of generous compensation for truly appalling damage done by troops.

While these views may of course have only been the personal opinion of the speaker I cannot help fearing that they may have been intended to prepare our minds for the staging of incidents by the Germans. See in this connexion my telegram No. 283,<sup>3</sup> third paragraph, and also point three in my telegram No. 207.<sup>4</sup> Suggestion that Czechs who are in a minority may be expected to fall upon the Germans who are in the majority hardly rings true, though Germans would of course counter this by saying Czechs are armed. At a recent audience President Benes mentioned to me that troops for whose release we were pressing might have to remain in certain areas where German roughs were threatening Czechs with unpleasant fate in store for them when troops had gone. German Secretary's suggestion is more odd in view of strong German insistence that troops should be withdrawn.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. See No. 393, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of May 27, Mr. Newton expressed the view that no real progress could be accomplished unless the 'Sudeten Germans and Reich Government can be committed (1) to accept disbandment as sole and final condition for real negotiations; (2) to agree that if Czechoslovak Government release their troops before they themselves think it wise to do so in order to meet German wishes, neither Sudeten nor Reich Germans would be entitled to complain if Czechoslovak Government should find it necessary to renew measures which cannot conceivably be regarded as aggression against Germany or other than protective. (3) As Czechoslovak Government have explained that one of the main objects of this costly measure was to preserve order and prevent incidents of which bitter and threatening complaints were made, the Reich Government would not be entitled to threaten action should incidents recur after demobilisation of troops.'

### No. 395

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 13)*

*No. 50 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5733/1941/18]*

WARSAW, June 10, 1938

My telegram No. 41.<sup>1</sup>

Czechoslovak Minister informs me that he had yesterday a relatively satisfactory conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. Slavik had a few days before had a somewhat heated conversation with the head of the Eastern Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who unfortunately invariably assumes a somewhat violent and arrogant tone in conversation with Czechoslovak Legation and had repeated complaints regarding concentration of Czechoslovak troops near Polish frontier and similar matters. M. Slavik yesterday assured M. Beck after enquiries of Prague that there had only been an increase of some few hundred in armed forces in the vicinity of Polish frontier chiefly consisting of frontier guards and police and that Czechoslovak Government had never had any intention of concentrating troops in that area

<sup>1</sup> No. 375.

in large numbers. M. Beck expressed his cordial satisfaction with this assurance and on his side repeated the assurance he had already given that there had been no increase in Polish armed forces on Czechoslovak frontier.

M. Slavik again informed M. Beck that Polish minority would receive any concessions given to Sudeten or other minorities and even probably a little more in practice. M. Slavik further told M. Beck that Czechoslovak police authorities were still anxious to collaborate with Polish police in the case of any complaint of Communist or émigré activities of an anti-Polish nature though the Polish authorities have never taken advantage of previous offer made in this connexion.

M. Slavik also requested that passports at a reduced rate should be granted to Volhynian Czechs and members of Polish Sokols who might wish to attend Sokol festival in Czechoslovakia this month. M. Beck said that he would make no difficulties regarding passports for Czechs living in Poland but that he could not grant the same facilities for members of Polish Sokols though he did not give any adequate reason for his refusal.

M. Slavik then spoke to M. Beck about the attitude of Polish press and more particularly regarding anti-Czech demonstrations in connexion with passage of Slovak travellers bringing Pittsburgh declaration from America. (See my despatch No. 189.)<sup>2</sup>

M. Beck was evasive and said that he personally never read the newspapers and that too much importance should not be attached to pro-Slovak demonstrations which had no official character. On other points raised by M. Slavik M. Beck was equally evasive though tone of conversation was relatively cordial. I asked M. Slavik how far he thought the movement here in favour of Slovak independence had any official support and what its ultimate object might be. M. Slavik said that for some years past certain professors and other persons had been working for a closer rapprochement with Slovaks who they contended were more Polish than Czech. M. Slavik thought that while M. Beck would not admit that he personally gave any support to such a movement there was little doubt that the head of the Eastern Section of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other official elements were giving financial and other encouragement to Hlinka Party, more especially to M. Sidor's faction. M. Sidor apparently favoured some form of federalisation with Poland and it was hoped here that he might become successor to Hlinka in leadership of Slovak Party.

I further asked M. Slavik what value either in military or economic sense the Teschen area could have for Poland. He remarked that the areas would undoubtedly be of considerable value to Poland but that otherwise he failed to see that Poland had much to gain either in a military or an economic sense by acquiring this area though it would of course be very serious for Czechoslovakia if she were to lose it as the main railway communications between Bohemia and Slovakia ran through it. I propose to report by next bag a despatch fully examining this side of the question.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> No. 364.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 11, 7.35 p.m.)  
No. 288 Telegraphic [C 5698/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 11, 1938, 5.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 157.<sup>1</sup>

As a further means of maintaining pressure and as a prelude to my audience today I called on the President of the Council yesterday evening to enquire the state of his negotiations and as to what lay behind Sudeten Party's letter and communiqué referred to in my telegram No. 278.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hodza told me memorandum to which President Benes had alluded at my audience on June 3 had been supplemented by a further memorandum covering self-administration and all other issues. The first memorandum had been produced in reply to his own request for a written explanatory note. Dr. Hodza had received Sudeten representative on June 8 and it had been agreed to accept as a basis of negotiations the memorandum and also draft Nationality Statute. In reply to my specific enquiries he admitted that while Sudeten representatives had been informed of the general nature of the Statute they had not seen any written text. This was in Dr. Hodza's . . .<sup>3</sup> enabled him to mould its provisions to meet Sudeten requirements and obviated any question of Government prestige such as might have arisen in certain alterations in a text which had been communicated. From his attitude when I alluded in confidence and under full reserve to stories mentioned at the end of my telegram No. 284<sup>4</sup> I fancy, however, that Dr. Hodza has also been anxious to avoid showing a definite text to Sudeten representatives until after the elections next Sunday. Dr. Hodza thought action reported in my telegram No. 278 had been taken in consequence of certain misunderstood and unimportant interviews by two members of the Government.

Neither Sudeten memoranda were to be regarded as unalterable and he expected to begin formal and serious negotiations with the Sudeten representatives next Tuesday, the way for them having been prepared meanwhile by negotiations between Dr. Hacha and Dr. Schicketanz. Even then however I gathered that only the favourable parts of draft statute will be shown. At present it contains one chapter on self-administration which was, Dr. Hodza seemed to imply, rather inadequate.

I informed the President of the Council of the anxiety with which you were following the proceedings and in particular your fear lest moderates should be swept off their feet at any moment by the extremists and Herr Henlein's autonomy replaced by Herr Krebs. It was most desirable therefore that something concrete and definite should be achieved and announced at the earliest possible date if only as a kind of . . .<sup>3</sup> in proof of good faith. I also made the point that according to certain accounts I had seen Germany was at present rather gorged with Austria which was all the more reason why

<sup>1</sup> No. 384.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 392, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> No. 392.

Czechoslovak Government should now press negotiations to the earliest possible conclusion. Dr. Hodza concurred and said he hoped that by the middle of next week it would be possible to agree and announce certain specific concessions.

While the foregoing was rather better than I had expected Dr. Hodza said that it was impossible to be optimistic because he was really dealing not with Sudeten representatives but with what he called 'Anschluss forces'. More than once in the course of our conversation he remarked that self-administration was the difficulty and that Sudeten demands went too far. They were not compatible with the constitution nor were they administratively practicable. It must be remembered too that President of the Council is always more forthcoming than President Benes who on the other hand precisely because he is more careful and reserved in his utterances may be more reliable and effective in measures in [sic]<sup>3</sup> which he does commit himself. Dr. Hodza told me that when he receives the Sudeten representatives next Tuesday the acceptance of the memoranda together with draft Nationality Statute as a basis for negotiations then to be begun will be formally made. Meanwhile subject to what President Benes will tell me this afternoon I would suggest we should be guarded in saying anything in advance to the German Government. In particular we do not wish to give them any plausible excuse for maintaining later that by showing bad faith e.g. over nominal acceptance of a national Diet as one of the points in basis for negotiations Czechoslovak Government have made themselves responsible for a subsequent rupture.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 397

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 167 Telegraphic [C 5726/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 11, 1938, 5.30 p.m.

I understand that the Czechoslovak Government have decided that reservists numbering about 70,000 due to do their annual training in September shall be called up now instead.

2. A decision thus to advance the date of this annual training of reservists is likely to have a deplorable effect in Germany, to undo any good that may have been done by the recent disbandment of certain reservists called up three weeks ago, and possibly to occasion a fresh serious crisis.

3. If, therefore, you are satisfied that the Czechoslovak Government are contemplating this action, I shall be glad if you will warn them as soon as possible of the very serious effects that it may have, and ask them to refrain from prejudicing the present position by hasty action.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 194 Telegraphic [C 5675/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 11, 1938, 6.45 p.m.

1. In my telegram No. 175<sup>1</sup> I expressed the hope that the French Government would without delay instruct their Minister in Prague to use to Dr. Benes language similar to that which Mr. Newton was instructed to hold in my telegram No. 142<sup>2</sup> to Prague, and at the same time to warn the President that if the Czech Government were unreasonable the French Government might well declare themselves released from their word.

2. In your telegram No. 169<sup>3</sup> you reported that M. Bonnet had promised to instruct the French Minister accordingly though he put forward the suggestion, to which I agreed in my telegram No. 180,<sup>4</sup> that his representations should be separate from those of Mr. Newton.

3. From the account given in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 282<sup>5</sup> you will have seen that not only did the French Minister not see M. Benes until June 8, whereas Mr. Newton saw him on June 3, but also that, although M. Bonnet told you that the French Minister would have to go further in his representations than Mr. Newton, he does not appear either to have represented to the President the importance of accepting as a basis of discussion the propositions outlined by Herr Henlein in London or to have made use of the special argument arising out of the treaty relations between France and Czechoslovakia. Indeed his interview with M. Benes seems to have been mainly of an exploratory character.

4. I shall therefore be glad if you will do your best to ensure that proper instructions as promised are now sent to the French Minister. Since you cannot disclose our knowledge of the instructions sent to the French Minister, perhaps the best line to adopt will be to give M. Bonnet an account of Mr. Newton's interview with M. Benes as reported in his telegrams Nos. 265,<sup>6</sup> 182 Saving,<sup>7</sup> 183 Saving,<sup>8</sup> and 185 Saving,<sup>9</sup> and then to ask him whether he can inform you of what passed at the interview which the French Minister will have had with M. Benes as a result of the instructions M. Bonnet promised to send him as reported in your telegram No. 169, and more particularly as to M. Benes's reaction to the warning referred to in paragraph 1.

5. In this connexion you may be able to make use of the information reported in your telegram No. 369 Saving.<sup>10</sup>

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 354.

<sup>3</sup> No. 357.

<sup>5</sup> No. 389.

<sup>2</sup> No. 353.

<sup>4</sup> See No. 357, note 2.

<sup>6</sup> No. 373.

<sup>7</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 4 Mr. Newton reported that President Benes had told him that further measures would shortly be taken to control the press.

<sup>8</sup> Not printed. See No. 371, note 2.

<sup>9</sup> No. 377.

<sup>10</sup> No. 390.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 12)*  
*No. 289 Telegraphic [C 5692/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 11, 1938

Your telegram No. 157<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 288.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of my audience today I said to President Benes that His Majesty's Government attached importance to his views and actions at the present time which they believed to be very critical. This explained my importunity. I had however just obtained from Dr. Hodza certain details of Sudeten negotiations which so far as they went were perhaps reassuring. Nevertheless there was still no definite result to show and you believed it to be urgently important to strengthen the hands of the moderates.

2. You had moreover been much impressed by reports of the situation as seen at Berlin by His Majesty's Ambassador. Although I did not intend to make any written communication I had prepared some notes from these reports in order to save burdening the President's own time and memory.

3. I then handed to him a composition giving the following extracts from Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 272 Saving,<sup>3</sup> sub-paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 of third paragraph; paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 substituting for the last sentence of 5 the last sentence of Berlin telegram No. 262;<sup>4</sup> paragraph 9, beginning from 'All rumours' and paragraph 10 down to 'At earliest possible moment'. I made certain slight variations in the text copies of which will be forwarded in next bag. After glancing through these notes the President said he would give me an entirely frank statement of the position but before doing so he wished to make an emphatic protest against certain suspicions and in fact calumnies directed against himself personally which he knew to be current in London and Paris and especially in London. On this protest which was delivered at length for communication to you I shall report in a later telegram; I know that he made a similar protest some days ago to my French colleague.

4. The President then explained the situation in regard to the negotiations as follows.

5. The first memorandum communicated by Sudeten German party had related solely to self-administration and did not cover any other points.

6. He had therefore told the President of the Council that he ought to insist on a complete statement of Sudeten claims and after some hesitation this had been produced in second memorandum. For the first time therefore on last Wednesday afternoon June 8 the party had revealed their real claims.

7. The fact that they had come out with them seemed to President Benes

<sup>1</sup> No. 384.

<sup>2</sup> No. 396.

<sup>3</sup> No. 378.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 9, Sir N. Henderson reported that 'any good which may have been done by partial disbanding of reservists had been more than discounted by announcement of three years' service'. The sentence quoted ran: 'It is regarded here as confirming general conviction that M. Benes does not intend to adopt a compromising [*sic*] policy.'

to be a good sign and to indicate that an agreement could be achieved. He had worked on the memorandum that same evening until 2 a.m. and succeeded in reducing it from twenty pages down to one page of concrete demands, or points. There were twelve, of these six important points could be accepted almost in full. On three a compromise was possible. The remaining three could not be accepted in principle and would be administratively impracticable. This information I was to regard as being of a preliminary and confidential nature. In the course of next week I would receive a written commentary on various points, as he was anxious that we should be kept fully and frankly informed. The communication of this commentary will of course also be confidential.

8. As an instance of an unacceptable point President Benes said that Sudeten German party asked for a Volkstag to represent only Germans wherever resident in the Republic. As it was fundamental that there should be equality of treatment for all nationalities this means diets also for Poles, Magyars, Roumanians (of whom there were thirty thousand on the Eastern Frontier) Ruthenians, Russians, and Jews to which might be added Slovaks. The Volkstag was to elect a President who would be ex-officio and life member of the Cabinet. He could not be dismissed by the President of the Republic or the Central Parliament. Such institutions would be, said President Benes, impossible monstrosities. It was moreover contemplated that Ministry of Education would be abolished, thus opening the way to the introduction of National Socialist teaching and Aryan . . .<sup>5</sup> &c. in schools. The claims in respect of Volkstag and also for the alterations which he did not specify in Provincial Councils could not be granted. On the other hand a request for greater powers for communal and district councils could be granted and many other adjustments made.

9. At frequent intervals throughout the audience which lasted an hour and a half I reiterated the importance not only of going to the limit of what was possible but of doing something in the immediate future in order to strengthen the moderate elements. I made the same point as with the President of the Council yesterday that, Germany being perhaps gorged with Austria, now was the time for the Czechoslovak Government in their own interest to insist on a settlement.

10. President Benes agreed with this point but when I further suggested that by the end of next week something of what the Czechoslovak Government were already prepared to concede might be announced as evidence of sincerity and in order to encourage Herr Henlein President Benes said he had not yet discussed this with Dr. Hodza but thought it would be dangerous and prejudicial to the success of the negotiations to announce in advance of their conclusion what the Government would accept. When I pressed him and pointed out that such an attitude might be misrepresented as a device for withholding overdue concessions he said that his objection need not exclude the possibility of publishing some early reassuring statement announcing that definite progress had been made on various points.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

11. The President showed no objection to acceptance of Sudetic memoranda as a basis of negotiations. He said that the President of the Council would also give Poles, Magyars and German Social Democrats an opportunity of stating their desiderata in writing so that he could take all these statements as a basis for negotiations.

12. In reply to my enquiry M. Benes assured me that this procedure would not entail delay. I expressed my satisfaction at ability of Czechoslovak Government to accept Sudeten memoranda as a basis, but having in mind the example of Austria I also said that in expressing such acceptance no doubt the Government would be careful to give no excuse for a subsequent charge of bad faith.

13. President Benes replied that they were fully alive to the importance of this point and would make their position clear to the Sudeten representatives. I suggested also that powers of Volkstag could perhaps be limited and defined in some practicable fashion. While not rejecting the suggestion M. Benes evidently doubted the possibility of such a solution.

Towards the end of the audience I remarked that in the situation which had developed it seemed to me that Sudeten Germans or at any rate the two and three-quarter million of them residing near the frontier could hardly be kept permanently as they were against their will.

While I appreciated objections to experiments which he had mentioned to me on June 3 some experiments might nevertheless in the present circumstances be the lesser evil. I made a similar incidental remark during my conversation with the President of the Council yesterday.

Repeated to Berlin Saving. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 400

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 12)*

*No. 290 Telegraphic [C 5719/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 12, 1938

My telegram No. 286.<sup>1</sup>

Military Attaché considers that main contentions of the Chief of the General Staff to be entirely reasonable as the Czech army is too weak numerically to ensure against surprise and offer initial resistance to cover mobilisation. The acquisition of strength which three years' service clause will give army (about 80,000 men) is the minimum which could be effective and it would, he feels, be taking grave responsibility to oppose the measure. I agree and would add the following comment:

The enrolment on May 26 [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> was for a special purpose and representations we have made to the Czechoslovak Government have been based on the view that the danger, against which it was thought necessary to take these special measures having passed, they should be withdrawn in general interest of appeasement. New measures now proposed are not for a special purpose

<sup>1</sup> No. 393.

<sup>2</sup> This should read May 20.

but for normal purpose of ensuring the country's defence in the changing circumstances.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

#### No. 401

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 15)*

*No. 207 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5831/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 12, 1938

My telegram No. 289.<sup>1</sup>

I took the opportunity of this audience to repeat to President that I had expressed at Ministry of Foreign Affairs appreciation of His Majesty's Government of readiness shown by Czechoslovak Government to welcome British observers. I also mentioned that, as indeed President already realized, leading article in 'The Times' of June 3<sup>2</sup> did not represent the views of His Majesty's Government.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 399.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 374, note 2.

#### No. 402

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 13, 7.00 p.m.)*

*No. 293 Telegraphic [C 5786/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 13, 1938, 4.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 289,<sup>1</sup> second paragraph.

Protest made by President was as follows:—

Particularly in London and also in Paris an impression had been created that Czechoslovak Government and above all he personally were deliberately prolonging or postponing a settlement of Sudeten question and were misusing military situation for that purpose. He was worried and upset by such stories and must make an emphatic protest. If there was anyone who had striven to change the atmosphere and influence the Czech radicals it was he and nobody else could have done it. Dr. Hodza with whom he had worked in close co-operation had often asked Dr. Benes to reassure Catholics and Social Democrats and it was on Dr. Benes's authority that public opinion had been prepared for appropriate and far-reaching concessions. The attack directed against him personally was therefore slanderous and had probably been instigated from German sources.

During a pause I tried to suggest that if there were such an attack it could most effectively be met by achievement of early results in Sudeten question but the President refused to be diverted. He said it was extremely important and an essential condition for his work that he should enjoy confidence and there must be a certain degree of good will on the part of all concerned. One proof of his personal sincerity was that he himself had been the author of

<sup>1</sup> No. 399.

memorandum communicated a little while ago to His Majesty's Government setting forth a programme of concessions. This programme had been thought at the time by parties on the Left to be a revolutionary act. Even some of his Cabinet Ministers had protested and President had had to say that he personally undertook responsibility. His action was inspired not by any need of tactical manoeuvres but because he was convinced that it was in true interests of his country. The originators of such stories as that he wished to set up a military dictatorship were themselves the agents of dictators and spread such stories precisely because it was known that Dr. Benes in his present position was a guarantee against introduction of a dictator or totalitarianism in Czechoslovakia. They knew he was uncompromising opponent of racial doctrines Aryan...<sup>2</sup> and suchlike National Socialist theories and propaganda was made against him in Sudeten area and in Berlin because he was a guarantor of real democracy.

President felt it necessary to say the foregoing in order to counter dissemination of propaganda and suspicions in Government circles in London. All progress which had been made in dealing with Sudeten question in Czechoslovakia had been due to pressure behind the scenes from himself. It was absolutely necessary that London and Paris should understand this and that His Majesty's Government whose help he appreciated should not accept the rumours and suspicions that he was insincere. Ever since he had been President he had felt it to be his mission to find a solution of nationalities problem. He was not a dictator and had to consider public opinion in Czechoslovakia as it had also to be considered in England but he would do everything in his power. He wished also to say that while Czechoslovakia would defend itself if attacked and wage a defensive war he had opposed in 1936 and would continue to be opposed to any suggestions for a preventive war.

Repeated Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> The text here is uncertain.

#### No. 403

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 13, 8.45 p.m.)*

*No. 294 Telegraphic [C 5771/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 13, 1938, 6.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 167<sup>1</sup> evidently crossed my telegram 286.<sup>2</sup>

You will now have seen that the purpose of calling up about 40,000 (not 70,000) men now instead of in September is to bridge over gap pending introduction of 3 years' service. Apart from these about 20,000 were to be called up now in any case for their normal service. Figure given to you of 70,000 is therefore not only exaggerated but misrepresents true position.

View of Czechoslovak General Staff that present normal strength of Czechoslovak army is inadequate to meet its responsibilities is as you will

<sup>1</sup> No. 397.

<sup>2</sup> No. 393.



have seen from my telegram 290<sup>3</sup> endorsed by Military Attaché and some justification for their opinion will be found in paragraph 8 of Berlin telegram 272 Saving.<sup>4</sup> It would therefore hardly be fair to describe the present measures as 'hasty' or to accept German view that they are provocative. Indeed if we support Dr. Goebbels's indignation over any step taken by Czechoslovak Government whether unreasonable or not he will merely be encouraged to be increasingly unreasonable in his protests. In estimating them it should not be forgotten that Germany has been persistently attacking this country in the press and wireless and that the foreign press were publicly addressed by Herr Hitler himself as a reason for increasing military strength of Germany.

In judging strength which from now on will normally be required for defence of Czechoslovakia, I submit only Czechoslovak Government and possibly their allies are entitled to express views. If we offer advice and warnings such as those suggested in your telegram under reference we must inevitably incur heavy moral responsibility of protecting Czechoslovak Government from consequences of following our recommendation.

Actually I doubt whether they would follow them and fear results of giving them would be firstly to encourage German extremists and secondly to prejudice the influence we at present hold over Czechs. The latter are determined to safeguard themselves to the best of their ability against surprise and if we suggest they should refrain from taking what seems to them an essential measure for that purpose they will come to believe (as some already suspect) that we have no sincere interest in their welfare and are concerned solely for our own safety. Please see in this connexion my telegram No. 259.<sup>5</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris Saving.

<sup>3</sup> No. 400.

<sup>4</sup> No. 378.

<sup>5</sup> No. 368. Mr. Newton was instructed on the evening of June 15 that, in view of the considerations advanced above, he need take no action on telegram 167.

#### No. 404

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received June 13, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 274 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5772/4786/18]

BERLIN, June 13, 1938

#### Part I.

Prague telegram No. 290.<sup>1</sup>

From purely military point of view as well as from that of expediency of demonstrating to Germany Czech determination to fight for her existence, adoption of three years' service and abnormal calling up in June of September reserves may be entirely reasonable. Moreover responsibility which presumably must be France's for discountenancing or even, if needs be, forbidding, these measures of defence is a very heavy one.

Nevertheless from political standpoint they are fraught with obvious

<sup>1</sup> No. 400.

danger. There are indications such as violence of press campaign particularly in party organs closest in touch with Chancellor that Germany is seeking a pretext for intervention which she can with some show of reason attribute to Czech provocation. Enquiry of German Ambassador as recorded in paragraph 4 of your despatch No. 917<sup>2</sup> of June 8 regarding French and consequently British action in the event of grave Czech provocation is ominous in this connexion. In conversation with me on June 10 and June 11 Minister for Foreign Affairs made similar enquiry. On first occasion I referred him to your personal message of May 21 and on second replied in accordance with paragraph 5 of above-mentioned despatch which I had just received.

If therefore Czechoslovak Government introduce three years' service law in the midst of the present negotiations German Government may well seize the opportunity with fatal consequences to declare this act as provocative and instruct Henlein to break off negotiations. Their argument will be that to take these new measures in preparation for war in the midst of negotiations for peaceful solution constitutes proof that Czechoslovak Government prefers to risk general war rather than satisfy Sudeten population.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 386.

#### No. 405

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 13, 7.0 p.m.)*  
*Unnumbered Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5772/4786/18]*

BERLIN, June 13, 1938.

Following is continuation of my immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

German standpoint will be that Czechoslovak Government would never have risked taking such a step if they had not been sure of Anglo-French support since all measures of defence would be useless without such support.

While I shrink from making any recommendation which may have the effect of putting us under obligation to the Czechs it is clear British advice and reputation for sincerity in Berlin will be gravely discounted if these military measures are adopted by the Czechoslovak Government in advance of serious attempt to achieve comprehensive solution on neutral and federal lines. It is impossible not to appreciate or sympathise with the Czechs' mistrust of Germany or their desire to insure their country's defence. Nevertheless they cannot have it both ways and I feel obliged to point out that these measures if taken in the midst of our negotiations may well irremediably prejudice prospect of their success. This will certainly confirm German Government in their conviction that (a) M. Benes does not honestly intend to make adequate concessions to Sudetens and (b) Czech War Office is under Bolshevist influence and controls the Government.

<sup>1</sup> No. 404.

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 13, 9.45 p.m.)*

*No. 181 Telegraphic [C 5789/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 13, 1938, 8.5 p.m.

Your telegram No. 194.<sup>1</sup>

I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon and handed him a short memorandum embodying account of the interview with M. Benes on June 3. I then asked what were the reactions of M. Benes to the communication made to him by French Minister.

2. M. Bonnet replied that after careful reflection and consultation with M. Léger, he had decided that the best method of communicating with M. Benes on this occasion was not through French Minister but through M. Osusky, whom he had summoned and whom he had given a memorandum<sup>2</sup> couched in very strong terms, with request that he would himself deliver it into the hands of M. Benes (see my telegrams Nos. 369<sup>3</sup> and 370<sup>4</sup> Saving of June 9 and June 10). This memorandum stated amongst other things that France was determined to work in close collaboration with Great Britain in this matter and that if public opinion in the latter country veered against Czechoslovakia owing to her showing herself to be unreasonable the attitude of France towards whole question might well change entirely.

3. I then told M. Bonnet that, owing to reports received by His Majesty's Government from His Majesty's Ambassador Berlin, they had again instructed Mr. Newton to seek another interview with M. Benes in order to impress upon him the necessity of acting quickly, particularly with a view to avoiding substitution of extremist Herr Krebs for Henlein. I urged that similar instructions should be sent to French Minister at Prague; but M. Bonnet asked me to wait until he had seen M. Osusky on his return from Prague.

4. M. Bonnet now tells me that M. Osusky reports very favourably on the effect of his mission upon M. Benes. It is hoped that great improvement will be made with negotiations at Prague with Sudeten representatives as these negotiations are being carried on on the basis of Sudeten demands.

5. I told M. Bonnet that although M. Benes was apt to be free in his promises he was often remiss in fulfilling them. This had been confirmed to me during the past few days by several Frenchmen (M. Sauerwein whom I did not give away, told me only this morning what an impression M. Benes had made upon him after a recent interview).

6. His Excellency promises to continue to support us at Prague whenever we feel that it is necessary.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 398.

<sup>2</sup> For the text of this memorandum see No. 447.

<sup>3</sup> No. 390.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported M. Osusky's departure for Prague.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)**No. 1254 [C 5783/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 13, 1938*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador to-day, His Excellency asked me whether we had any further information with regard to Czechoslovakia. The feeling of his Government was that the Czechoslovak Government were doing the best they could to make progress in very difficult conditions, and that there was a certain danger in our attempting to press them too hard, as this might constitute a temptation to them to disregard any counsels of prudence and let events take any course they might. I told His Excellency that I shared with him the feeling that it would be wrong to press the Czechoslovak Government too hard. On the other hand, I was also conscious of the danger that, if we did not press them hard enough, it might be a temptation to some elements in Czechoslovakia to feel that, in view of the promise of French support and the definition of the British attitude given in Parliament in March, they might try to go more slowly than the facts of the situation warranted. M. Corbin agreed that the equilibrium was a very delicate one and that we must wait and see how the negotiations of the next few days developed. We both agreed that the attitude of the German press and the public speeches that were from time to time made by members of the Government in Germany were not encouraging evidence of the German desire to help.

I am, &amp;c.,

HALIFAX

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 15)**No. 385 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5805/1941/18]*PARIS, *June 14, 1938*

On June 14 M. Caillaux reiterated to a member of my staff his opinion that France would never fight for Czechoslovakia. In M. Caillaux's view, the French Government had acted very indiscreetly in the matter up to date—though he was bound to admit that their bluff had luckily succeeded so far. If things had gone less well, however, France would not have mobilized. M. Daladier himself had assured M. Caillaux that he would never have signed the decree of mobilization. France would, so M. Caillaux believed, have gone to the League, and have endeavoured to bring the German Czechoslovak Treaty of Arbitration into play, but she would never have mobilized.

M. Caillaux then volunteered that he thought the Czechs would be very much in the wrong if, in the middle of negotiations, they passed a law increas-

ing the period of military service from 2 to 3 years, as Germany could look upon this as a distinct provocation. France, M. Caillaux insisted, would not be drawn into a war on M. Benes's account.

I must add that only this afternoon the Minister for Foreign Affairs repeated to me that, in the event of a German attack upon Czechoslovakia, France would stand by the latter, and that it was vital that Germany should realise this. He seems hopeful, however, that the present negotiations at Prague will reach a peaceful and satisfactory issue. He thinks it essential that His Majesty's Government and the French Government should remain in the closest touch on this subject and should closely follow the details of the negotiations with a view to deciding without delay what is reasonable in the demands of the Sudeten and what is not.

Copies sent to Berlin, Prague and Rome.

#### No. 409

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 15)*  
*No. 386 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5806/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 14, 1938

My telegram No. 385 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

The same member of my staff had a conversation on June 14 with the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chamber.

As regards Czechoslovakia, M. Mistler echoed the views expressed by M. Caillaux, though he added that it was possible that France might be forced into a war for Czechoslovakia if not for M. Benes. . . .<sup>2</sup> M. Mistler also said that in his view the proposed increase in the period of military service in Czechoslovakia could, if Germany wished, be regarded as a provocation, and he thought it highly injudicious to take such action in the middle of negotiations. M. Mistler said that the Quai d'Orsay shared this view. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Copies sent to Prague, Rome and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 408.

<sup>2</sup> A personal reference is here omitted.

#### No. 410

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 18)*  
*No. 205 [C 5996/2470/55]*

WARSAW, June 14, 1938

My Lord,

I have had frequent occasion in recent weeks to draw your Lordship's attention to the unsatisfactory attitude of the Polish Government towards Czechoslovakia. A venomous press campaign has continued almost without interruption in that part of the Polish press subject to governmental control or persuasion. The local elections in the Polish communes near Teschen have been followed with an unbridled partisanship, and the Czechs have



been accused almost daily (with what degree of justice it is hard to say) of using methods of terrorism and unfair administrative pressure to gain their ends. Nor has the public been allowed to forget that Czechoslovakia took an unfair advantage of Poland's difficulties during the Russo-Polish war in 1920 to gain possession of an ethnographically Polish area.

2. It seems to me, indeed, increasingly clear that the Poles may well be hoping to make certain territorial gains, directly or indirectly, as the result of the present dispute, and I have been led to enquire what advantages might accrue to them from the possession of the Teschen area. In this connexion, I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy<sup>1</sup> of an interesting memorandum by His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Katowice on the subject. As I remarked in the last paragraph of my telegram No. 50, Saving,<sup>2</sup> of June 10, there are in the Teschen area large quantities of coal which is particularly valuable for coking purposes and is widely used in Polish Upper Silesia. The steel works of Moravska Ostrava and Vitkovice are, however, outside the Teschen area proper. On balance, there seems to me to be no sufficient justification on economic grounds for Poland to seek to acquire the area. Equally, on ethnographical grounds, one must really wonder whether for the sake of some 120,000 Poles the game is worth the candle. From a military point of view, however, the position is somewhat different. The possession of the area is of vital importance to Czechoslovakia because the main east-to-west railway connexion between Bohemia and Slovakia goes through Teschen. I am advised that the possession of the Teschen area is not really of any vital strategic importance to Poland, unless it were regarded as so very advantageous to Poland to weaken Czechoslovakia's powers of cohesion. Unfortunately, I am afraid that the weakening of Czechoslovakia must now be regarded as one of the objects of Polish policy.

3. This conclusion appears even harder to avoid if one considers the Polish attitude towards the Slovak question (see my despatch No. 189<sup>3</sup> of June 1). There are not the same ethnographical or even commercial considerations here as there are in the case of Teschen, nor (unlike the case of Teschen) do I think the Polish Government have any real idea of territorial gains in Slovakia. But, if Slovakia were to fall under either Russian or German influence, the Poles would consider their security thereby affected. In present circumstances, how is this to be avoided? The association under Senator Gwiżdż, known as 'Friends of Slovakia,' who received the American Slovaks with such pomp and ceremony, are said to favour an independent Slovakia with some sort of federalisation with Poland. Such a scheme was actually suggested to the Slovak delegation in an article which was distributed to them. It was printed in a newspaper generally regarded as under the influence of the Polish Ministry of Agriculture. I have been able to obtain a French translation of this interesting document, and I enclose a copy herewith.<sup>4</sup> It is not, I think, of any great importance in itself, but is certainly highly significant as showing the trend of thought of some circles

<sup>1</sup> Not printed.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> No. 364.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

here which are clearly not without influence and some official support. On the other hand, certain National Democrat circles (with remarkable lack of sympathy for the previous oppression of the Slovaks) are said to favour handing over Slovakia to Hungary. Such a scheme was favoured some time ago by the Chief of the Polish General Staff (see my despatch No. 149<sup>5</sup> of May 4), though I am told that he has since changed his mind. All the quarters mentioned above are said to favour giving Eastern Ruthenia to Hungary. M. Beck, I think, is probably following none of these courses. His is a policy of pure and somewhat unscrupulous opportunism, encouraging the Autonomist party in Slovakia, but probably without any very clear idea of how its successes are to be turned to account. I enclose an extract from a conversation<sup>5</sup> on June 10 between my Military Attaché and the Polish Chief of Staff, which seems to confirm this view, and the remarkable reticence of Marshal Smigly-Rydz when questioned by the French Ambassador (see my telegram No. 41<sup>6</sup> of June 4) seems to indicate that M. Beck has converted the highest military quarters to his opportunist outlook.

4. To Western eyes the dangers of such a policy must be obvious, particularly for a State with such large minorities, such rapacious neighbours and so weak a strategic position as Poland. But I have little doubt that the policy of the Polish Government is as I have described it above. M. Beck is probably sincere when he expresses his earnest desire for a peaceful settlement of the Czechoslovak problem, and from M. Beck's point of view it is certainly arguable that the dangers for Poland of associating herself with a French-Czech-Russian combination in this matter far outweigh the dangers of a policy of opportunist neutrality. But I fear that the word 'opportunist' has in this case a meaning unfavourable for Czechoslovakia, and if the German army were, as the result of some incident, to cross the Czech frontier, I find it difficult to believe that, for the reasons I have described above, the Polish Government would not find some plausible excuse to occupy at any rate the Teschen area.

5. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin and to His Majesty's Minister at Prague.

I have, &c.,  
H. W. KENNARD

<sup>5</sup> Not printed.

<sup>6</sup> No. 375.

ENCLOSURE NO. 2 IN NO. 410

*Extract of Conversation with General Stachiewicz.*

At 2 o'clock this afternoon I paid my official farewell visit to General Stachiewicz, the Chief of the Polish General Staff.

After commenting on the notable increase in armament and fighting efficiency of the Polish army that I had seen in my time here, I asked him whether he would give me any ideas on Poland's real desires as regards, firstly, the Teschen area, and secondly, the Slovak region.

He replied that Poland would under no circumstances take the initiative

in trying to force changes on the Czechoslovak State; but that the Poles were determined, if something approaching autonomy were granted to other minorities by Czechoslovakia, that the Polish minority in Teschen should fare no worse. (I also took this to cover the possibility of a change by *force majeure* if the Germans initiated any such steps, as he was most emphatic on the point that Poland would ensure equal treatment of the Polish with the Sudetendeutsch minorities.)

I replied that views had been expressed, even in the Polish press, which went far beyond this comparatively mild statement of aims. He laughed and said: 'That may be—but I am now talking of practical politics. We are merely awaiting the announcement of the Czechs' own intention in the matter, and can assure you that we shall do nothing to stir up trouble; but we are absolutely firm on the point that we are not to be fobbed off with fewer concessions than those granted to Germany.'

As regards the Slovaks, General Stachiewicz said that Poland merely awaited events; they were naturally interested in the fate of a people on their immediate borders, but by no means to the same degree as in the Teschen area, which they regarded as a matter affecting their own nationals. But with the Slovaks again, they had no intention of taking any initiative, unless and until a situation presented itself in which they had to take some action.

We then discussed the likelihood or otherwise of Germany employing force in obtaining her ends in the Sudetendeutsch area. He gave it as his opinion that, provided no untoward incidents occurred, and provided the Czechs made really important concessions, the Germans would not force the crisis. But he had grave doubts of the Czechs being able to see sufficiently their own weakness and how inevitable important concessions were. As to their weakness, he quoted the figure of 20 per cent. of Germans in the army, and the total of over 50 per cent. of minorities of one sort or another. He was seriously afraid that the Czech mentality was so obstinate as to be incapable of envisaging the necessities of the situation.

J. T. GODFREY, *Lt.-Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché*

*June 10, 1938*

<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of the conversation see No. 411.

#### No. 411

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 18)*  
*No. 206 [C 5973/5302/18]*

WARSAW, *June 14, 1938*

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 205<sup>1</sup> of to-day's date regarding the policy of the Polish Government towards Czechoslovakia, I have the honour

<sup>1</sup> No. 410.

to transmit to your Lordship herewith an extract from a despatch from the Military Attaché to the War Office recording a conversation which he has had with the Chief of Staff, General Stachiewicz.

2. As your Lordship will observe, General Stachiewicz spoke at length of the present situation in Russia and of the possibility of Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia. There is, I think, no doubt that Soviet Russia could only give serious help to Czechoslovakia by land if she were to make use of the railway system of southern Poland; but any such attempt, implying military occupation, would inevitably be resisted by Poland. The latter would hope to have the assistance of Roumania, whose security would equally be threatened. This, indeed, is certainly regarded here as the fundamental object of the Polish-Roumanian alliance.

3. According to General Stachiewicz, however, the Polish General Staff do not believe that the Soviet Government are now able, taking their internal position into account, to give military help to Czechoslovakia by land, and they think Russian help will be restricted to the supply of aeroplanes. As I have reported to your Lordship previously, the Czechoslovak Government have apparently already obtained a number of bombers from Russia, and this has caused great annoyance here. Indeed, General Rayski, the Polish Chief of Air Staff, recently informed Colonel Godfrey that he had actually sent up fighters to give chase to some Russian bombers which were being transferred to Czechoslovakia, but that in no case had they been able to bring one down, as various routes had been chosen and the bombers had travelled by night.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Moscow and Berlin and to His Majesty's Minister at Prague.

I have, &c.,

H. W. KENNARD

ENCLOSURE IN No. 411

*Extract from Conversation between Colonel Godfrey and General Stachiewicz  
on June 10, 1938*

At this point I asked how far he thought the Soviets would be ready to assist Czechoslovakia. This started a long lecture on the weaknesses of the Soviets in general.

He admitted first of all that new formations of the Russian army had been located quite recently all along the Polish and Roumanian frontiers. But he said that this was not a sign either of a move directly related to the recent political events, or even of increasing Russian strength—rather the opposite. This process of moves of whole divisions (five new ones had been located opposite the Polish frontier during 1937, and one or two more since) had been continuous for over a year, and was dictated not by the desire to aggress towards the west, even in aid of Czechoslovakia, but far more by an ever present fear of invasion from the west, which with them was an *idée fixe*: and above all by the fact that the whole railway system of Russia had by now

become so unreliable that the Army Command no longer felt it capable of supporting the traffic of concentration once war started: they had therefore decided to effect the majority of the concentration in peace-time. This was done by the simple process of ejecting to the interior of Russia the populations of whole villages, and filling them with troops.

Pursuing this theme of the weakness of Russia, General Stachiewicz said that despite the difficulties of getting information, which even the Poles now felt in that country, he had had a detailed study made of the oil production and the railway systems in Russia. Oil production, he found, had already been developed to the utmost limit. That meant that if war came it could not possibly be increased. Nevertheless, nearly 50 per cent. of this production already went into agriculture (driving tractors and other machinery concerned in the whole process of food production). If, therefore, the tremendous demands of war-scale aviation and mechanised forces were suddenly superimposed on the existing demands, agriculture would practically have to stop. Furthermore, the horse-basis on which agriculture had been conducted, and which could conceivably have been a reserve method, had practically been destroyed.

Similarly with regard to local locomotive manufacture. He had had reported cases in which Russian locomotives, turned brand-new out of the factories, had had to be returned after only six months' use for major repairs. Railway traffic returns as a whole had been increasing annually until 1937, in which year, under Kaganovitch, they had reached an unusually high peak; but there had been a sudden and violent recession. This had been found to be due to forcing the use of railway material and ruthless abandonment of all essential maintenance and repair work, until suddenly the point of total collapse was reached.

Again, in the economic field, it was noteworthy that although the planned figures of production of coal, iron, oil, &c., had been on a steadily rising scale up to and including 1937, in 1938 there had been a sudden recession even in the figures aimed at, coupled with a remarkable drop in the percentages attained even on those reduced aims.

In sum, he gave it as his considered opinion that Russia would very soon reach a crisis which would put her out of action not for months but for years. This was particularly due to the extremely centralised nature of her whole economic machinery, coupled with the impossibility of getting suitable staff to work so complicated a machine. He had found that on the average nowadays the heads of great industrial enterprises on a national scale only held their posts for five to six months. How could any continuity be ensured on this basis? This had its counterpart in the army, where officers who only had five to six years' service after passing out of the schools of their arm commanded brigades.

He in fact claimed to detect the commencement of a cracking of the whole Soviet structure: if this were in fact the case, there were no 'centres of initiative', as there would be in normal European life, to start rebuilding or repairing. He felt, therefore, that except for some possible assistance by a



few aeroplanes, the Soviets could be discounted as a factor beyond their own boundaries for some years to come.

We then reverted to Germany. Here he felt the saving factor was the increasing risk of any adventures, coupled with Hitler's extreme ability in measuring those risks. He was convinced that the German army was not yet fully prepared, either as regards formed units, or as regards reserves of men and matériel (quite apart from questions of raw material). In formed units there were many officers with only a year's training. He calculated that as regards reserves of men and officers a really satisfactory state would not be reached till 1941 or 1942—largely, of course, owing to the fifteen or so years' gap in which reserves could not be created. Finally also as regards matériel, he had had reports, not as yet completely confirmed, that the Germans were dissatisfied with their light tanks, and proposed to withdraw them all, substituting a new type. He also felt that the Reichswehr still had sufficient control of the situation to act as a brake on the wilder men of the Nazi party.

On the whole, therefore, he hoped that we would get over the present crisis without disaster unless the internal tension in the Sudetendeutsch regions themselves reached breaking point, and created a situation in which Hitler's prestige was so involved that he was forced to take forceful action.

Finally, at parting he said that he was going on a short period of leave with his family, to be followed on June 26 by a visit to the Baltic States.

J. T. GODFREY, *Lieutenant-Colonel,*  
*Military Attaché*

## No. 412

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 257 Telegraphic [C 5771/4786/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 15, 1938, 8.00 p.m.*

While appreciating the points made in your telegrams Nos. 262<sup>1</sup> and 274,<sup>2</sup> I feel that there is even greater force in the considerations advanced in Mr. Newton's telegram No. 294.<sup>3</sup> I fully appreciate the danger that the proposed Czech military measures may be used by the Germans as a pretext for intervention, but I feel that there is an equal danger lest the failure of the Czechoslovak Government to maintain order and authority should lead to an incident which would also give pretext for intervention (cf. your telegram No. 271<sup>4</sup> and Prague telegram No. 287<sup>5</sup>). If the Germans desire to quarrel with Czechoslovakia, they will always be able to find a pretext; and it may be that the effective guarding of the Czechoslovak frontier will discourage them from seeking an occasion, and will give time for the pressure which we

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 399, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> No. 404.

<sup>3</sup> No. 403.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. This telegram of June 11 gave details of the German press campaign against Czechoslovakia.

<sup>5</sup> No. 394.

are putting on the Czechoslovak Government to reach agreement with the Sudetens to become effective.

If, when the proposed measures are taken by the Czechoslovak Government, the German Government show a tendency to reproach His Majesty's Government for failing to prevent them, I should like you to explain clearly to Herr von Ribbentrop the position as His Majesty's Government now see it in this regard. They were prepared three weeks ago to put pressure upon the Czechoslovak Government to demobilise troops because they were earnestly desirous of doing everything they could to assist in the general reduction of tension between Germany and Czechoslovakia at that time. It is however impossible to deny that the action taken by the Czechoslovak Government in consequence of this pressure has been largely discounted by the continuance of a violent press and wireless campaign in Germany, and in particular by speech delivered by Herr Hess.<sup>6</sup> In these circumstances His Majesty's Government cannot feel surprised that the Czechoslovak Government should be unwilling to forgo any measure that in their judgement contributes to their military security—more especially as they presumably feel that the efforts they made failed to produce a response from the German side.

I am not concerned to argue whether they are right or wrong, but no one can suppose that Germany is in any danger of attack from Czechoslovakia, and, anxious as is His Majesty's Government to give all possible help to bringing about better relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia, I am not in present circumstances prepared to undertake the responsibility of pressing the Czechoslovak Government further at this stage on the question of military security, of which they must be allowed to be the judge. On the other hand we shall continue to maintain strong pressure at Prague to induce a peaceful and just settlement of Sudetendeutschen grievances, and the fact that we have deputed observers to investigate any incidents in the Sudeten area is evidence of our desire to give practical assistance and prevent excesses from whatever quarter.

Repeated to Prague.

<sup>6</sup> In a speech at Stettin, on June 12, Herr Hess referred to Czechoslovakia as (1) obviously not in a position to maintain internal order or to protect its citizens and (2) as a danger spot for European peace.

#### No. 413

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
(Received June 15, 9.30 p.m.)

*No. 275 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5879/4786/18]*

BERLIN, June 15, 1938

I had a few minutes' talk with the State Secretary at a party yesterday which he was leaving early to attend a meeting with Field-Marshal Göring. I told him that I had noticed with satisfaction the milder attitude of the

press towards Czechoslovakia and reminded him once again that if the German Government wished to co-operate with us in our efforts for peaceful solution the best proof of such desire at this moment would be moderation of the press attacks and criticism. Herr von Weizsäcker said that he had been pleasantly surprised himself for once not to see Czech news on front page of the newspapers. But, he asked, were the Czech reserves really being disbanded? I assured him that 50,000 had already gone and that the remainder were being dismissed at end of their four weeks' training. Would, however, he enquired, they not be replaced? I told him that I believed that the Czechoslovak Government was contemplating the possibility of calling up somewhat earlier than usual a certain number of reserves who would normally have to do their training in any case this year. He expressed regret that this should be thought necessary and said that it seemed that the Czechoslovak Government had not abandoned the idea of three years' service. If this measure was introduced it would, he said, be 'very serious'.

I was relieved to leave it at that, since I fear that, if three years' service is adopted before negotiations for settlement on comprehensive lines of Nationality Statute have been thoroughly tried out, it will be unavailing for me to counsel moderation here or to convince German Government of efficacy of our good offices at Prague. German standpoint will be that it is idle to talk of satisfactory settlement or conciliation when at the same time law is introduced compelling Sudeten Germans to do three years' military service, sole object of which is to train them to fight at a future date against other Germans. There is too much force in this contention to controvert it with any hope of success. Germans will merely retort that if solution is not going to lead to peaceful relations between themselves and Czechoslovakia there is no point in it at all.

At best moreover (i.e. if negotiations continue in spite of law) only result of it will be to intensify the German military preparedness against Czechoslovakia and in the end Germans can always out-bid Czechs in this respect. Argument used by Mr. Newton in second paragraph of his telegram No. 294<sup>1</sup> that press attacks justify increased military strength is one which I have used in my efforts to induce the German Government to mitigate their anti-Czech press campaign. But it is a two [?-edg]ed one.

I earnestly trust therefore that His Majesty's Government will be able to induce the French Government to veto a proposal which, if adopted at this stage, may well, as I feel bound to point out, wreck all prospect of satisfactory settlement. I can see value of threat to introduce this law as card in M. Benes's hand, yet if he plays it, it will be difficult oneself to believe and possibly to make Germans believe in sincerity of his intentions.

Repeated to Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 403.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 18)*

*No. 203 [C 5975/1941/18]*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the undermentioned document from H.M. Consul, Liberec.

BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE, *June 15, 1938*

ENCLOSURE IN No. 414

LIBEREC, *June 13, 1938*

Sir,

I have the honour to report that during the past week I travelled through the Sudeten German areas of North Moravia and Silesia upon which I reported last summer. I was surprised to find how great a change had taken place since my last visit. It used to be almost a commonplace, and I reported this a year ago, that the conflict between Czech and German was not so bitter in this area as in North Bohemia. The inhabitants are engaged in agriculture and are very strongly Catholic and Conservative. Until quite recently the German Agrarians and Christian Socialists had been able to maintain their position *vis-à-vis* the Henlein party. But two events, the 'Anschluss' and Czechoslovakia's partial mobilisation of May 21, have produced a great change. One person with whom I discussed it explained that until the 'Anschluss' the people accepted the situation with resignation since incorporation in Czechoslovakia appeared to be part of the inevitable fate of the Germans in Moravia and Silesia: now it is felt to be otherwise. And on top of the 'Anschluss', which has brought hitherto undreamed of possibilities of freedom, has come the mobilisation of Czech troops by whom the almost purely German towns of North Moravia—an important strategical district for Czech defence—have been overrun. Clearly the military occupation of any area must have disagreeable consequences for the civil population. Here the difference of nationality renders the position more than usually difficult. The streets of Mährisch Schönberg, when I arrived there on June 4 in the evening, were crowded with soldiers either conversing in small groups or walking up and down. In Mährisch Altstadt, 10 miles to the north on the frontier, there are said to be several thousand troops. It would be incorrect to say that their behaviour was overbearing or provocative: on this occasion they seemed to ignore the Germans. But it is reasonable to suppose that there have been exceptions to the general rule, and one can assume that there is some truth in the many stories of unprovoked aggression which one hears. A German lawyer in Zwittau informed me that in the past fortnight (but not, apparently, previously) he has had to deal with innumerable cases of provocation in which the details are often insignificant, whereas the principle involved is of great importance. Taken together these stories justify a grave indictment of the conduct of the lesser provincial officials. In Zwittau, he informed

me, a Czech policeman forcibly pulled off the white stockings which a German girl was wearing. In another case, two young Czechs blocked the road of a German boy who was riding a bicycle and obliged him to dismount: he punched them both and went off shouting 'Czech swine.' For this he was sentenced to forty-eight hours' arrest 'for doing bodily violence', and the authorities contemplate further proceedings against him on the ground that his language was calculated to stir up racial hatred. The Moravian Germans are a peaceful people, and the petty annoyances to which they are being subjected now are the more resented because they seem to be unmerited. The anger of the Czech population as a whole, which has been justly roused by German provocation in other parts of the country, is also being poured out on the hitherto placid Moravians with the result that they are becoming as bitter as the Germans of North Bohemia.

2. In several talks I discussed the prospects of reaching a settlement of the national conflict, and found everywhere the greatest pessimism based largely on a genuine doubt of the Czechs' willingness to live in harmony with the Sudeten Germans. Even if a formal settlement can be agreed upon, which is in itself a matter for doubt, the Germans seem to fear that the will to implement it is lacking on the Czech side. I also gained the impression even among moderate people that they would not be sorry if the Czech opposition to a reasonable settlement should prove so strong that the most drastic solution, namely, a referendum, would become the only possible way out of the deadlock. Their arguments seemed in substance to be directed towards converting me to the view that a referendum is the only satisfactory solution.

3. In Schönberg I was provided with a good illustration of the rather exaggerated susceptibility of the German population. The Sokol association of North Moravia had arranged to hold a rally in Schönberg as part of their celebrations of the great Sokol decennial festival. The date chosen was June 5, the day of the opening of the main festival in Prague. So far as I know the gate-money taken at this and other local rallies held all over the country was required to defray the expenses of the provincial delegations sent to the main festival at Prague. Schönberg lies quite close to the Czech areas of middle Moravia and is also an important railway centre for North Moravia. Granted that Czechs live in North Moravia—and many do, though they are mostly Government officials—Schönberg is the natural place for them to meet. It is, however, an almost purely German town. The Germans resent the holding of Czech festivals in their cities and it is only fair to add that there is no reciprocity of treatment in these matters: the Czechs would on no account allow Germans to hold national festivals in public in a Czech town. Even the German mass excursions to towns in the mixed areas—intended as moral support and national stimulus to the Germans living in such areas—have been given up as they have been generally prohibited in the past on the ground that they endanger the public peace. In the case of the Sokol meeting the Germans of Schönberg have an additional ground for annoyance because the celebrations in honour of the seventy-fifth anniversary



of the foundation of the local gymnastic association ('Turnverband') had been fixed a long time in advance for the very day later chosen by the Sokols for their festival. The Germans wisely postponed their celebration voluntarily in order to avoid friction, but they resented the Sokols' action as an intentional provocation. I was in Schönberg on the day of the Sokol meeting and saw the Czechs march through the town. The German inhabitants had gone away for the day so that the Czechs had the streets to themselves. Their behaviour was not provocative, and I noticed that two German girls in 'dirndl' dresses standing on the pavement were completely ignored by the marchers.

4. During my tour I visited several schools and learned from some headmasters that they have had great difficulties with the authorities and with their pupils on account of the latter's imprudent political utterances, &c. I have already reported that students' strikes have occurred or been threatened in some schools. One headmaster whom I visited was almost on the verge of a breakdown on account of the difficulties of controlling his students on the one hand and defending them on the other hand against the penalties imposed on them by the Ministry of Education. The problem of controlling the young people is plainly an anxious one for schoolmasters, but it was interesting to hear it asserted in the majority of cases that, on the whole, the students are still reasonable and receptive of good advice. One condition, however, is held to be indispensable if the growing radicalism is to be checked. It is necessary to offer the young people some prospects of a satisfactory economic future. Conditions seem to be very far from equal for Czechs and Germans. I was told in several towns that this could be demonstrated by personal experience. There are on the one hand many young Germans who have completed their university education in law, &c., but have still no jobs, whereas young Czechs who have only just finished their education in secondary schools come to the German towns to fill posts in the Government service. The problem of controlling the Sudeten German youth is, therefore, viewed by the headmasters and also others as principally an economic problem. Discipline and loyalty to the State cannot be expected from the young so long as no future is offered to them. One hears repeatedly that young Sudeten Germans have at last found employment in Germany after years of enforced idleness in this country. A comparison between the two countries is most unfavourable to Czechoslovakia and only stimulates the desire for incorporation in the Reich. I was informed that the allotment of a proportional share of Government posts to Germans would help greatly towards a solution of the problem of the growing radicalisation of young people.

5. My journey took me through Czech districts also, and I was particularly struck by the spirit in which the Czech civil population has accepted the mobilisation and other military measures. Restrictions such as the prohibition of photography in certain areas, the quartering of troops in private buildings, or the difficulties caused to business men by the calling-up of reservists, are regarded quite differently by Czechs and Germans. The

Germans habitually ridicule everything done by the military authorities, complain about the amount of compensation which they receive and dispute the usefulness of the Government's action. The Czechs, on the other hand, take the same restrictions and inconveniences as a matter of course, are proud to have the soldiers in their houses and make light of the difficulties in business caused by the calling-up of reservists. The conclusion which one is bound to draw is that many of the complaints which one hears among Germans are due more to ill-humour than to any justifiable grievance.

6. There is much alarm everywhere among the Germans on account of the alleged arming of Communists by the Government during the crisis. It is supposed that they have not given back their arms but are holding them to use upon the Henlein party in the first emergency. The Czechs too are said to be armed and ready to fall on the Germans if war breaks out. I cannot say that I have ever had definite proof that either of these assumptions is true. An influential Czech did once assure me that 'if one drop of Czech blood should be shed the Czechs would take a terrible revenge on the Germans'. This sort of statement does suggest that the Czechs would need little encouragement to set upon the Germans in a crisis and perhaps indicates that they may have weapons at their disposal.

I have, &c.,  
P. PARES

No. 415

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 17)*  
*No. 206 [C 5922/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 15, 1938

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 289<sup>1</sup> of June 11, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith summarised translations of the two memoranda<sup>2</sup> which have been presented to the Czechoslovak Government by the Sudeten German party as embodying their proposals. The documents have reached me from a confidential source, and neither the Government nor the party are aware that I am in possession of them.

2. You will observe that while the Henlein party have kept their promise not to include matters of foreign policy in their proposals (the only reference to foreign affairs at all is the proposal under Section VII of the second memorandum that arrangements must be made in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to represent the particular economic interests of the individual national areas), and while the question of 'Weltanschauung' is kept discreetly in the background, the only direct reference to it being at the end of Section II of the same memorandum, on the other hand the question of compensation is put forward as one of the leading demands.

3. After reading the two documents I am reinforced in the doubts I ventured to express in my despatch No. 106<sup>3</sup> of April 11 as to whether the

<sup>1</sup> No. 399.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

Government and the Henlein party will be able to reach at any rate a complete agreement. Even if the Henlein party are prepared to abate some of their more extravagant demands, it seems more than likely that there will be at least a residue of questions on which agreement will have proved impossible.

4. I therefore learned with satisfaction from Sir Nevile Henderson's telegram No. 264<sup>4</sup> of June 10 that he has a plan in mind in the event of an insuperable deadlock arising; for it would be very unfortunate if, after so much effort and risk to achieve a partial result, the residue remained to poison the atmosphere and to give a permanent opening for men of ill-will to revive the whole trouble and with it the possibility, if not probability, of disaster.

5. I would not suggest that an agreement reached on paper by any method would permanently dispose of the ancient antagonism between German and Czech in Bohemia. But it would at least render it more difficult to reopen the question in its present dangerous form, while from the point of view of this country it would seem imperative to obtain a full and final settlement before Germany has fully digested Austria and is ready for a new adventure.

6. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Berlin and Paris.

I have, &c.,  
B. C. NEWTON

<sup>4</sup> No. 391.

No. 416

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 169 Telegraphic [C 5692/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 16, 1938, 6.00 p.m.

I approve the language you used to Dr. Hodza and Dr. Benes, as reported in your telegrams Nos. 288<sup>1</sup> and 289.<sup>2</sup> In particular I approve the language you used to Dr. Benes, as reported in paragraph 10 of your telegram No. 289. It is not improbable that the points on which there is disagreement between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Germans will lead to protracted discussions, during which the patience of both Czechoslovakia and Germany will be put to considerable strain. It is therefore highly desirable that both parties should be able to point as soon as possible to agreement on at any rate a certain number of subjects.

I should accordingly be glad if you would continue to take every suitable opportunity of urging the Czechoslovak Government to announce their agreement to those portions of the Sudeten demands which they have made up their minds to accept.<sup>3</sup>

In paragraph 5 of my telegram No. 157,<sup>4</sup> I asked you to express to the

<sup>1</sup> No. 396.

<sup>2</sup> No. 399.

<sup>3</sup> Sir E. Phipps reported on June 18 that M. Bonnet had promised to send similar instructions to the French Minister at Prague.

<sup>4</sup> No. 384.

Czechoslovak Government the view that it would be unwise to refuse to consider the setting up of a 'Volkstag', the significance of which would depend upon powers enjoyed by it. In so instructing you, I had in mind a form of provincial Parliament, exercising a limited jurisdiction over a definite territory. The 'Volkstag' as outlined in paragraph 8 of your telegram No. 289 would seem to be something quite different and you should not commit yourself with regard to it.

Repeated to Berlin No. 53 Saving.

No. 417

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 16, 9.15 p.m.)*  
*No. 300 Telegraphic [C 5905/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, June 16, 1938, 7.35 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 275.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Stronge, Military Attaché to this Legation, is returning to London for a conference at the War Office and you may think it desirable to consult him on the military aspects of this question. So far as I understand it an addition to Czechoslovak standing army is necessary if Czechoslovakia is to be protected against a surprise attack. Failing such addition she must resort to partial mobilization in order to be in a position to resist such a menace whenever she feels it to exist. Yet a single repetition of the special measures of May 21 would surely be more provocative than three years' service. The Sudeten Germans in common with other Czechoslovak citizens already do two years' service and its prolongation is therefore irrelevant to the question of what particular countries may be thought to be potential enemies.

While I quite see further conspicuous evidence of Czechoslovakia's determination to defend itself if attacked will almost strike a jarring note it seems to me to be a confusion of issues for Germans to maintain that any reflection is thereby cast on the sincerity of the intention of the Czechoslovak Government to solve their nationalities problem. In fact if it were thought that the country was being left at the mercy of a sudden invasion I am not at all sure that the prospects of a satisfactory settlement would be improved on either side. Czechs would be unduly nervous and Germans tempted to press impossible demands. Military measures of May 21 while they may of course here and there have stimulated Czech chauvinism brought home the dangers of their situation to the Czechs and also had a sobering effect on Sudeten Germans thus contributing to an ultimate improvement of conditions for the present negotiations. After an initial flurry same effect may easily follow from sacrifices involved by the three years' service. The more so seeing that even when these sacrifices have been made the only [*sic*] element of surprise will have been met and overwhelming superiority of the Reich will remain so that there can be no question of Czech aggression.

Of course it would be another matter if Germany could and would give

<sup>1</sup> No. 413.

any more reliable guarantees than those already existing on paper not to intervene in certain circumstances in Czechoslovakia 'like lightning'.

Should the three years' service be introduced attention of Czechoslovak Government could of course be drawn to the unfortunate even if unreasonable reactions in the Reich and amongst Sudeten Germans and argument used that the Czechoslovak Government must therefore press on all the more urgently with the achievement of actual results which will provide the test of their sincerity and capacity.

Repeated Berlin Saving.

No. 418

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 312 [C 5906/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 16, 1938

Sir,

I asked the Czechoslovak Minister to come and see me to-day in order to hear his impressions after his recent visit to Prague. He told me that he returned in a fairly hopeful mood of the issue of the negotiations. Dr. Benes and Dr. Hodza were working a 100 per cent. together for the removal of objections held by other members of the Czechoslovak Government or by the parties supporting them, and any suggestion that Dr. Benes was obstructing was without foundation. He said that he thought, also, the lesson of Austria had not been without its value for the Sudeten-German leaders. He had met Herr Kundt, who is one of those charged on the Sudeten-German side with the negotiations, and had pointed out to him some of the difficulties inherent in the proposal for a separate Volkstag for the Sudeten-Germans. According to him, Herr Kundt, in his own words, had said: 'We are not going to be stuffy about that.' Before calling to see me he had spoken to Dr. Hodza on the telephone this morning, who had confirmed his view as to the progress, on the whole favourable, of the negotiations. The Germans, however, were doing their utmost by wireless and press to prejudice them. It was estimated that something like 2 million Sudeten-Germans and 5 million Czechs listened in to the German radio and the effect of the application of fuel by this means was very noticeable in the day-to-day talks between Sudeten-Germans and the members of the Czechoslovak Government.

2. In regard to the question of troops, M. Mašaryk told me that the information that had been conveyed to us as to a further call to the colours of some 50,000 men in June to bridge the gap between June and September was, if I understood him aright, incorrect. He also, if I heard him rightly, gave me to understand that no final decision upon the question of three years' service had as yet been taken. He promised, however, to clear up all these military points and let us have precise information.

3. I asked him whether Dr. Benes was at all disposed to resent the pressure that we had, through you, been placing upon him and he assured me that he was not. He, M. Masaryk, was very pleased that we had done so and hoped



that we should continue on the same course. There were some things that it was quite impossible for them to do, but short of these, pressure, in M. Masaryk's opinion, was nothing but helpful.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

No. 419

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 20)*  
[C 6011/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, June 16, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

Personally I feel much happier about the position at the moment. The deplorable and most violent anti-Czech campaign in the press has temporarily faded out and it would be a thousand pities if the Czech Government, by introducing a three years' military service law at this juncture of our intervention at Prague were to start the whole uproar again or even thereby to put a stop to all negotiations with the Sudeten.

I do not understand Benes's motive. The three years' law does not give immediate military relief so that it, at least, might well wait even if the calling up of more reserves cannot. Is he using the threat of such a law as pressure on the Sudeten and a warning to the Germans? Or is he using it to ensure our and French support by making us responsible for future events if we veto it?

The Swiss Minister who has just arrived and the Egyptian Minister who is leaving Berlin in a week's time for London, have been to see me lately. Both told me that they had been impressed by Hitler's calm and 'sweet reasonableness' when they presented respectively their letters of credence and recall. Hitler's moods have such importance that I was interested to hear these accounts of their interviews. Incidentally Hitler gave the Swiss Minister what the latter regarded as entirely satisfactory assurances about Switzerland. I could not help telling the Minister that what seemed to me entirely unsatisfactory was that they should have been given or required at all.

There is certainly a clique here which would like a gamble in Czechoslovakia but I still believe that at the moment Hitler's thoughts run on the lines of a peaceful solution. In principle I think we can take it that Hess's speech at Stettin a few days ago accurately represented Hitler's own views. It was violent enough, it is true, against the Czechs but it nevertheless praised peace. I remain, in fact, of opinion that all things being equal and Prague not too obstinate we should be able to get a peaceful solution this year since (a) the German army is not ready, (b) the four year plan not working yet to capacity and (c) Austria far from digested. My chief apprehension continues to be the risk of a serious incident (for instance say some 20 young Sudeten getting killed—doubtless in consequence of their own provocative folly, though the chance of the extremists of the other side engineering an incident cannot be altogether excluded).

If there were such an incident nothing could prevent German intervention of a sort. Hitler is too deeply committed and his prestige too much at stake. I do not believe that any warning of ours, however menacing, would stop him altogether, though we might get Germany at a price to give the arbitration treaty with Czechoslovakia a chance. But the price would have to be high: possibly the detachment of the overwhelming Sudeten areas or something of that sort.

Heaven guard us from an incident! All the same I still think that if Benes wants a solution that has any hope at all of being permanent, he would be well advised to be more generous than anyone expects and certainly more than his die-hards wish.

Yours ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 420

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 202 Telegraphic [C 5789/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 17, 1938, 4.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 181.<sup>1</sup>

I am glad to learn that M. Bonnet has now conveyed to M. Benes through M. Osusky the warning which he had undertaken to give (though it does not appear to be quite as precise as I would have liked).

2. In spite of M. Benes's protest at being suspected of prolonging or postponing a settlement of the Sudetendeutschen question (see Prague telegram No. 293)<sup>2</sup> I feel that M. Benes is still a prisoner of his own past, and that we cannot afford to accept his assurances altogether at their face value. In so far as M. Benes has to educate his own reactionaries he may find it indeed useful to be able to point to the fact that he is under considerable pressure from the French and British Governments. I hope, therefore, that M. Bonnet will not be deterred by M. Benes's resentment at being given advice which we both consider necessary in the interests of Czechoslovakia's own future welfare.

3. I share entirely M. Bonnet's view (see your telegram No. 385 Saving)<sup>3</sup> that it is essential that His Majesty's Government and the French Government should remain in the closest touch on the subject of Czechoslovakia, and for this reason I hope that M. Bonnet will be prepared to show you the actual text of the memorandum which he gave to M. Osusky for delivery to M. Benes and of the reply which M. Osusky should by now have brought back. It is indeed essential if our two Governments are to collaborate on the Czechoslovak problem that I and Mr. Newton should on each occasion know precisely what the French Government have said to M. Benes.

4. Finally in view of Mr. Newton's despatch No. 194<sup>4</sup> of June 7, you might

<sup>1</sup> No. 406.

<sup>2</sup> No. 402.

<sup>3</sup> No. 408.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. This despatch contained an account of a conversation between the Military Attaché and General Faucher, Chief of the French Military Mission, in which the

also enquire whether the assistance of the Chief of the French Military Mission, who no doubt exercises considerable influence in Czech military circles, could not be enlisted in keeping the Czechs alive to the realities of their situation.

latter 'not only agreed with all the (military) measures already taken, but he was emphatic as to the necessity for their retention until after the elections'.

#### No. 421

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 147 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6039/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 17, 1938, 6.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 141.<sup>1</sup>

1. The main purpose of the action that His Majesty's Government and the French Government have undertaken at Prague and Berlin is to reduce the risk of a European war arising out of the Czechoslovak question, and I have no doubt that in supporting our action as they do, the French Government are moved by the same consideration.

2. His Majesty's Government intend to continue to do everything in their power to promote such a settlement of the Sudeten German question by negotiation between the Czechoslovak Government and the Henlein Party, but they are doubtful whether even if a satisfactory solution of the Sudeten question, in its purely internal aspect, were reached, this would fully solve the German-Czechoslovak problem or remove the danger of war. It may well be that the root of the German-Czechoslovak difficulty is not so much the situation of the German population in Czechoslovakia as the foreign relations of Czechoslovakia, and, in particular, the undertakings of assistance she has received from and given to France and the Soviet Union. Herr Henlein, it is true, has agreed for the present not to press that part of the Carlsbad programme which deals with Czechoslovak foreign relations. But it must be anticipated that this question will be raised sooner or later either by Herr Henlein or by the German Government, by the latter, possibly, in menacing terms. This indeed may happen in the immediate future if the present attempt to settle the Sudeten question fails.

3. It would, therefore, seem wise that timely consideration should be given to it, so that His Majesty's Government and the French Government may be prepared in advance to cope with this problem for it may well be raised in circumstances of urgency such as will not permit of an improvised solution.

4. I have therefore been turning over in my mind possible readjustments of Czechoslovak[ia]'s external relations which, by reducing what Germany professes to regard as the provocative elements in the Czechoslovak system of Treaties, should tend to promote stability in Central Europe and lessen the chances of France being called upon to fulfil her obligation to Czechoslovakia in possibly unfavourable circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> No. 271.

5. It is my impression, as I think it is yours also, that M. Bonnet would be glad if the French Government could be relieved of the fear of having to fulfil an obligation which was originally undertaken in circumstances much more favourable to its effective fulfilment than those existing at present. At that time the demilitarised zone still existed, and it was hoped to get Germany into the League and to secure German co-operation in the maintenance of European peace. Incidentally, I have, as you know, never been able to discover from French Ministers what precise action France would in present circumstances take in order to fulfil her obligation to Czechoslovakia if the case arose.

6. It seems to me that, in order to satisfy what is reasonable in Germany's complaint, and at the same time to reduce the liability of France's being called upon to honour her treaty obligations, the easiest and least disturbing course would be to invite Czechoslovakia to remodel her treaty relations with France and the Soviet Union and Germany somewhat on the following lines. You will observe that the resultant system would correspond more or less to the present treaty arrangements between Belgium on the one hand and Great Britain, France and Germany, on the other. It would also preserve intact Czechoslovakia's position as a member of the League of Nations.

7. (a) The modification of the present Franco-Czech and Russo-Czech Treaties so as to relieve Czechoslovakia of her obligations to go to the assistance of France and of the Soviet Union in the event of an attack by Germany; and

(b) negotiation of an agreement between Germany and Czechoslovakia, by which—

(i) Germany would undertake not to infringe Czechoslovakia's integrity, and to respect Czechoslovak territory, except in the event of Czechoslovakia participating in military action against Germany;

(ii) Germany would afford assistance to Czechoslovakia if she were attacked; and

(iii) Czechoslovakia would undertake to prevent Czechoslovak territory from being used, for purposes of aggression against another State, as a passage or as a base of operations.

8. Such a solution would of course, maintain France's and Russia's obligations to Czechoslovakia intact, but by eliminating Czechoslovakia's undertaking to come to the assistance of France and Russia against Germany it would, it is hoped, remove what Germany may hold to be an element of friction in the present situation and thereby would have the effect (if accepted by Germany) of reducing the probability of France, and consequently Russia, having to fulfil these obligations.

9. I should be glad to know what M. Bonnet thinks of this proposal, or whether he has any alternative course to suggest.

10. In discussing the subject with M. Bonnet you would emphasise that, while His Majesty's Government would not think it desirable to introduce new elements into the present negotiations on the domestic issue, and are not accordingly suggesting any immediate action, they none the less wish to

consult the French Government on this aspect of the Czechoslovak problem, since we may, as I have pointed out above, be faced with it at short notice, in the near future.

11. It is, of course, essential that this consultation should not in any way lead our two Governments to relax the effort which they are at the present moment making to bring about an agreed settlement of the Sudetendeutschen problem.

Not repeated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> On June 9 a memorandum on the possibility of neutralizing Czechoslovakia had been sent to Sir E. Phipps, Sir N. Henderson and Mr. Newton. See Appendix IV.

#### No. 422

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 172 Telegraphic [C 5989/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 17, 1938, 8.15 p.m.*

From information which has reached me I anticipate that, if no adequate Czech offer is now forthcoming as a basis for agreement, the latent agitation for a plebiscite will be brought to the surface, though Henlein still does not desire this and its attendant dangers. It is therefore important that Dr. Hodza should realise this, and produce no initial suggestions which by manifest insufficiency would give a pretext for pressure on Henlein to be so increased as to force him prematurely and reluctantly to fall back on his second line.

#### No. 423

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 171 Telegraphic [C 6006/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 17, 1938, 9.50 p.m.*

Speaking to Sir A. Cadogan on June 13 M. Masaryk said that the Czechoslovak Government hoped to be able to submit any agreement reached with the Sudeten party to Parliament which was to meet next week. I now read a report in 'The Times' to the effect that Parliament is not to meet until July next. I should be glad to know whether this is correct, and what this postponement implies.

#### No. 424

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 1298 [C 5967/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 17, 1938*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on the 16th June and recapitulated all that his Government had done in Prague to bring



pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government to show reason and conciliation in the present negotiations with the Sudeten party. So far as M. Corbin was aware, Dr. Benes had complied on every occasion with the advice given him from Paris and London, and there could be no complaint against him. In these circumstances the French Government were inclined to doubt the wisdom of keeping up strong pressure on Dr. Benes, particularly in view of our complete failure to produce any corresponding effect in Berlin. In this connexion he referred with considerable indignation to the recent speech made by Herr Hess, and implied that such outbursts were calculated to render almost impossible the successful pursuit of negotiation.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan agreed that Herr Hess's outburst was quite unpardonable, and it was really almost necessary to ignore it if one were to have any hopes of a successful outcome of the negotiations in Prague. He added, incidentally, that His Majesty's Government had been considering making a remonstrance in Berlin on this subject, but he was not quite sure whether actual instructions to that effect had been sent to Sir Nevile Henderson. As regards the attitude of the Czechoslovak Government, and of Dr. Benes in particular, he agreed that they seemed to have made great efforts to do all that lay within their power to seek an agreement. What we were afraid of was that, now that the elections were safely past and there appeared to be a slight *détente*, Dr. Benes might lose sight of the need for urgency, which in our view was still as great as ever. So long as the period of uncertainty continued, we should remain at the mercy of an incident which might break down all negotiations and lead to a conflict. Sir Alexander Cadogan observed that the Czechoslovak Minister had told him some days ago that it was Dr. Hodza's firm intention to conclude the discussions this week, to obtain agreement and to refer that agreement to Parliament next week. He had now noticed that Parliament is adjourned until July, and this seemed to indicate a further slowing up of the procedure. We thought it therefore important to urge Dr. Benes to make all possible speed. There were one or two other points which we wished to urge upon him. In the first place, we had attached importance to an early announcement that the Henlein demands should be taken as the basis of discussion; this he noticed had been announced this morning by the Czechoslovak Government. A further point to which we attached importance was that Dr. Benes should tackle at least some of the easier questions at issue, endeavour to reach quickly agreement upon them, and then announce that agreement. We felt that that would do a great deal to lessen the tension and improve the prospects of negotiation on other points reaching a successful conclusion.

3. M. Corbin agreed that it might be desirable to represent this to Dr. Benes, but on the general question he repeated that his Government would rather hesitate to keep up very strong pressure on Dr. Benes unless fresh circumstances should arise which seemed to call for it. He added that, owing to the special position which France enjoyed *vis-à-vis* Czechoslovakia, he thought that the French Minister in Prague had been even more insistent than his British colleague. This gave Sir Alexander Cadogan an opportunity

of observing to M. Corbin that some time ago M. Bonnet had suggested that the French Government might indicate at Prague that unless the Czechoslovak Government could satisfy the French Government they were being reasonable in the negotiations, the French Government might have to reconsider their position under their treaty with Czechoslovakia. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that recently we had enquired of M. Bonnet whether he would be prepared to give a message of this kind in Prague, in which case we would instruct His Majesty's Minister also to make representations. M. Bonnet had agreed, and had even himself suggested that the representation should not be a joint but a separate one, for the reason that the French Minister would have to go rather further than His Majesty's Minister. This we agreed to, but it appeared now from Paris telegram No. 181<sup>1</sup> that M. Bonnet had not sent instructions to the Minister in Prague, but had merely given a memorandum, the exact contents of which were unknown to us, to the Czechoslovak Minister in Paris. M. Corbin said he thought we could assume that M. Osusky would have delivered the memorandum to his Government, and Sir Alexander Cadogan agreed, but observed that a direct representation in Prague might have commanded more careful attention.

4. M. Corbin reverted to the reluctance of his Government to continue addressing urgent representations to Dr. Benes unless the latter by some shortcoming seemed to have merited them, but Sir Alexander Cadogan again urged upon him the desirability of impressing on Dr. Benes the need for speed generally and the desirability in particular of trying to get certain points settled quickly and the settlement announced. Sir A. Cadogan also used the argument that it might strengthen Dr. Benes *vis-à-vis* his reactionaries if he could point to strong pressure from Paris and London. M. Corbin replied that, on the other hand, it might drive them to desperation. So far as we were concerned, we did not know very much in detail about the progress of the negotiations. One point that had been mentioned to Sir Alexander Cadogan by the Czechoslovak Minister here related to the Sudeten demand for a Volkstag. He agreed that, in the form in which the Sudeten party seemed to contemplate this body, the proposal might be impracticable, but he hoped that the whole idea would not be rejected by the Czechoslovak Government; it might well be that some central body in the German districts, provided its scope and functions were properly defined and within constitutional possibilities, might not prove an insuperable obstacle.

I am, &c.,  
HALIFAX

<sup>1</sup> No. 406.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)**No. 174 Telegraphic [C 6005/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 18, 1938, 7.30 p.m.*

In view of the probable German objections and other difficulties in the way of the proposal adumbrated in my telegram No. 137<sup>1</sup> I am now considering the possibility of sounding the Czechoslovak Government as to whether, in the event of a breakdown of negotiations, they would be ready to accept the services of an independent British expert who would try and reconcile the two parties. I should be glad to hear your views on this idea. The kind of expert I have in mind would be someone with practical experience of administration and of minority problems, such as an ex-Governor of an Indian Province. Or do you think that some outstanding figure, without necessarily any expert knowledge, would be preferable?

<sup>1</sup> No. 347.

## No. 426

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 20)**No. 226 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6055/1941/18]*PRAGUE, *June 18, 1938*Your telegram No. 169.<sup>1</sup>

I called on President of the Council today to enquire what progress had been made with the Sudeten negotiations.

Dr. Hodza was not very explicit but informed me that he had just communicated privately to Herr Kundt and Herr Rosche a verbal and written statement in regard to certain points and the Government attitude thereto for submission to Herr Henlein. Proposals were, I gathered, made as to the principles on which the discussions should be continued early next week. Dr. Hodza thought it would be difficult to refuse his proposals and that their acceptance would greatly facilitate and accelerate the negotiations so that at the end of next week agreement on certain points could already be announced.

I reiterated to the President of the Council the embarrassment caused to His Majesty's Government and to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin by the absence of visible progress and emphasized the considerations mentioned in the first paragraph of your telegram. In particular I expressed the hope that if there were objections to conceding in advance all the points which the Government were already prepared to admit, at least one or two points could be announced as having been agreed, for example, in regard to the use of language or the distribution of the budget. Dr. Hodza pointed out that hardly any of these points could be put into practical effect until the outlines of self-administration had been settled. I replied that if there were delay in agreeing upon the framework within which these minor measures were to assume practical

<sup>1</sup> No. 416.

shape I hoped that at least some announcement could be made of the readiness of the Government to make such concessions in principle.

As regards a Volkstag, Dr. Hodza said that as originally proposed it was impracticable but he would try to give the Sudeten party satisfaction by fitting some of their proposals into a scheme which he had for the reconstruction and development of the existing Representative Bodies for the provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia.

While Dr. Hodza was hopeful of achieving a genuine settlement he said it was impossible to be sure what the Sudeten party really wanted. He realised that no time must now be lost and would do his utmost to reach agreement but intended in any case by the week of July 12, when Parliament met, to introduce the Government's concessions and reforms. In explanation of the delay which had occurred he made the point that if it had not been for the desire of the Government to avoid a one-sided settlement without prior agreement, the Nationalities Statute might by now already have been enacted.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton was informed on June 23 that his language was approved. He was also asked 'to continue whenever occasion offers to urge both on Dr. Benes and M. Hodza the vital importance that His Majesty's Government attach to speedy and far-reaching results in the present negotiations with the Henlein party'.

#### No. 427

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 20)*  
*No. 230 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6056/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 18, 1938

Your telegram No. 172.<sup>1</sup>

My impression is that one of Dr. Hodza's chief objects in refraining from showing the text of the draft Nationalities Statute to the Sudeten German party has been precisely to avoid the danger to which you allude of making an initial offer which, however far-reaching it might have seemed to the Czechs, would almost inevitably have been characterized as inadequate by the Sudeten German party.

Dr. Benes admitted, however, during my audience on June 11 that there might have been too much talk in official circles and the press about this statute. The present method appears to be to work on the Sudeten programme and adapt the statute so as to give effect to the maximum degree possible to the Sudeten requirements. This procedure seems sound.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 422.

No. 428

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 20)*

*No. 397 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6003/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 18, 1938

Your telegram No. 202.<sup>1</sup>

I spoke as instructed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon.

M. Bonnet promised to send me text of the memorandum taken by M. Osusky to Prague, and of the reply that he brought back.

His Excellency felt that a message of this nature taken by air to M. Benes would have far greater effect on the latter than another of numerous interviews that the French Minister has with M. Benes.

M. Bonnet will get pressure put upon the Chief of the French Military Mission to urge moderation in Czech military circles, but he admits this officer is now more Czech than French in his views.

<sup>1</sup> No. 420.

No. 429

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 20)*

*No. 399 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6043/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 18, 1938

Your telegram No. 147<sup>1</sup> Saving of June 17.

I made an oral communication to the Minister for Foreign Affairs as instructed regarding the possible re-modelling of Czechoslovak treaty relations with France, Russia and Germany. I left with him the text of paragraph 7 of telegram under reference as an *aide-mémoire*.

M. Bonnet promised to study the question carefully and to reply in due course. He quite agrees that our efforts to bring about an agreed settlement of Sudeten problems must not meanwhile be relaxed in the slightest degree. He also feels secrecy to be essential, as it would be disastrous if Germany were to hear of this plan, until France and Great Britain are in complete agreement thereon.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 421.

<sup>2</sup> On June 30 Sir E. Phipps was instructed (tel. No. 160 Saving) 'to press M. Bonnet for an early expression of his views' on the proposals in No. 421. Lord Halifax, during his visit to Paris (see No. 523), also reminded M. Bonnet that no answer had been received.

No. 430

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 19)*

*No. 278 Telegraphic [C 6001/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 19, 1938

Czechoslovak Minister called on me today on his return from Prague. He had, he said, seen M. Benes, President of the Council, Minister for Foreign Affairs and President of Negotiations Commission and was inclined to be



optimistic. Of dozen or so points included in Sudeten memorandum half were acceptable at once, three were susceptible to compromise and three were unacceptable. Latter concerned (a) indemnities, (b) what he described as a veiled attempt to secure territorial autonomy and create a state within a state by means of Volkstag and (c) an exaggerated claim for protection against de-naturalisation<sup>1</sup> in certain areas.

Minister had, he said, just called on State Secretary at Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose attitude had been friendly while recommending no delays. Czechoslovak Minister had pointed out that in a (? democracy)<sup>2</sup> it was impossible to dictate but that Czechoslovak Government was determined to waste no time. He added confidentially Parliament would be summoned for middle of July, i.e. in a month's time.

2. Czechoslovak Minister mentioned that State Secretary had expressed grave concern in regard to the three years' service law. I told Minister that I could not help personally being apprehensive lest this law if it was adopted before agreement had been reached with Sudeten might serve Germans as an excuse not only for an (? intensive) anti-Czech press campaign but also for attributing failure of negotiations to Czechoslovak Government. Minister said that he himself was inclined to share these apprehensions and proposed to telegraph in that sense to his Government.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> This word appears to be a mistake for 'denationalisation'.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 431

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 22, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 304 Telegraphic [C 6167/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 21, 7.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 174.<sup>1</sup>

If, as is probable the present negotiations between Government and Henlein party lead to no complete conclusion one of two things appears likely to happen. Either there will be a definite breakdown probably accompanied by an immediate demand on Sudeten side for a plebiscite or as seems on the whole more likely negotiations will drag on inconclusively until Parliament meets in middle of July when the Government will proceed to introduce their Nationalities Statute regardless of the fact that reservation of principles will not have been accepted by the Henlein party. Whether the latter will in such circumstances be prepared to give the statute a trial in practice without accepting any responsibility for its contents or whether they will refuse to accept it even with reservations and demand a plebiscite instead it is too early to prophesy. But in any event it would be useful to have up our sleeves a proposal for mediation. The proposal here under consideration would, I presume, supplement and perhaps form a prelude to that suggested as a last resort by Sir N. Henderson in his telegrams Nos. 254<sup>2</sup> and 264.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 425.

<sup>2</sup> No. 359.

<sup>3</sup> No. 391.

2. Before sounding the Czechoslovak Government I am inclined to suggest that it would be preferable to wait until it is clear that negotiations are not going to achieve success. For if the Czechoslovak Government felt they could fall back upon a kind of court of appeal in which there was no German element it may be that they would make less effort to reach agreement direct in the belief that they will get better terms than by direct negotiation. I realise that by delaying to sound Czechoslovak Government we might sacrifice a possible means of forestalling a demand for a plebiscite. But such a demand could only be prevented if we were to sound in advance both Czechoslovak Government and the Henlein party, a proceeding which might inject rather a disturbing element into present negotiations. In any case our proposal far from losing its utility by delay could be brought forward at an opportune moment as a compromise between the two ideas (*viz.* plebiscite and statute) neither of which was acceptable to the other side.

3. Although it might be anticipated that the Czechoslovak Government would welcome the proposal for the reason just given and also because it would tend to commit His Majesty's Government to further interest in their fate, tact in putting it to them would be desirable and advance publicity such as occurred in regard to the appointment of observers should be avoided if only because Czechs' acceptance cannot be taken for granted. In the first place acceptance of outside mediation in solution of an internal problem would inevitably be a blow to their pride and might seem to form a disagreeable precedent. Secondly there is, as I have reported from time to time, always a certain latent suspicion amongst the Czechs that the British policy in Central Europe is directed to solely selfish ends and for that reason they might hesitate unless pressed very hard to accept purely British mediation in a matter which would affect the whole future of their independent existence.

4. Presumably the proposal could not be put into operation without agreement of the Sudeten German party. Their attitude is more difficult to forecast as (*a*) they can hardly be regarded as independent agents (*b*) it is not easy to know what at the bottom they really want if indeed they know it themselves. In favour of acceptance would be their eagerness to put themselves right with the world and particularly British opinion and their anxiety not to make their territory into a theatre of war. Against it would be the fear of having to accept less than they could expect otherwise to obtain by continuing to clamour and to invoke the aid of big brother over the frontier without whose approval they would in any case hardly agree.

5. With regard to the personality of mediator I think it would be better to avoid choosing anyone whose experience is limited to India or Colonial Empire since, however foolishly, the connexion might be considered derogatory by both sides: experience of the problems of Ireland, French Canadians, Palestine or Danzig might be helpful but it is of course important that no one should be chosen whose previous record compromised him with either side as for example in the case of the last High Commissioner in Danzig.

6. There would no doubt be an advantage in appointment of an outstanding figure whose impartiality and judgment could more readily be accepted

by both parties. He should however perhaps be assisted by a man with practical experience of administrative and racial problems who could moreover remain in this country for some time if necessary. It may well prove insufficient for mediators to confine their task to finding a solution of the various problems in principle and it may perhaps be necessary for one of them to extend it to some kind of mediatory supervision in execution of a scheme. The conclusion of a settlement on paper cannot be expected in itself to solve the many intricate problems which will have to be thrashed out if the two peoples are to live peaceably together. That will be a matter of years and it is probable that disinterested outside assistance will prove as necessary in that respect as in reaching agreement in principle which we are now seeking. There may, I appreciate, be political and practical objections to prolongation of a mediator's function but the possibility is one to be borne in mind if we are to make a real job of this delicate and perhaps vital business.

No. 432

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 176 Telegraphic [C 6200/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 22, 1938, 10.30 p.m.*

I learn on good authority that the Sudeten leaders are very dissatisfied with the course of negotiations, and in particular with the attitude of Dr. Benes and the Czech press. They contend that the Czech memorandum of the 18th instant (see your telegram No. 226 Saving)<sup>1</sup> contains no substantial concessions but merely represents an attempt to patch up the existing system of local administration, instead of planning a real system of autonomy. They also feel that the recent official communiqués regarding the negotiations and the press comments thereon represent an altogether too optimistic account of the progress of these negotiations; in fact, that they show a complete failure on the part of the Government to comprehend the situation.

2. The Sudeten leaders hold that whereas agreement with M. Hodza would be possible if he were given a free hand, Dr. Benes has taken no steps to educate the Czech press and the Czech parties so as to accustom them to the necessity of concessions.

3. The Sudeten leaders indeed suspect that by a combination of official optimism in the press and practical procrastination in the negotiations, Dr. Benes hopes to exhaust the patience of the Sudeten negotiators so that they will break away and enable Dr. Benes to place on them the blame for the ensuing rupture.

4. I realise that these criticisms and complaints may well be exaggerated and biased (in particular I do not believe that Dr. Benes wishes to bring about a rupture). I equally appreciate that the fundamental reform of the administration of a highly civilised State must needs be a lengthy and delicate process requiring both forbearance and patience. But even after making

<sup>1</sup> No. 426.

these allowances I am not happy about the progress of the negotiations or about the attitude of Dr. Benes and the Czech press. I realise that in intervening at this stage there is a danger of our being forced into the position of having to express an opinion on the technical shortcomings of the Czech memorandum of June 18 and to answer the arguments which may appear in the commentary which you expect to receive from Dr. Benes this week (see your telegram No. 231 Saving).<sup>2</sup> I would wish to avoid this if possible.

5. On the other hand, I consider the attitude of the Czech press, as shown in your telegrams Nos. 222 Saving, 234 Saving and 306<sup>3</sup> to be so unsatisfactory as to require that strong representations should be made to the Czech Government. Such representations will afford a convenient occasion for you to reiterate in strong language the view held by His Majesty's Government that speedy and far-reaching offers by the Czech Government are essential if the present negotiations are not to reach a dangerous deadlock.

6. You cannot of course quote the information I have received from the Sudeten leaders, but you could say that His Majesty's Government are disturbed by such rumours reaching them, and you will no doubt be able to find ways of elaborating your arguments. You should not fail to stress the necessity of educating the press and public to the need for unpleasant concessions, instead of as at present buoying them up with false optimism, and you should also warn the Czech Government that if a rupture were now to occur at a time when, according to Dr. Benes himself, an agreed compromise is possible on nine out of the twelve Sudeten demands, the effect on public opinion in this country would be most serious, and it would certainly condemn the Czech Government for having missed the last opportunity of solving this question by friendly agreement.

7. I realise that you have spoken to M. Hodza on this subject as recently as the 18th instant (see your telegram No. 226 Saving) and it is on Dr. Benes that I imagine we principally have to exert pressure. Unless therefore for any reason you think it undesirable, I should wish you to see Dr. Benes rather than Dr. Hodza.

8. I have just received your telegram No. 304,<sup>4</sup> which brings out clearly the dangers of offering prematurely the services of a British mediator. I realise that the moment for doing so has not yet arrived, but as it may come suddenly you should watch the situation with a view to warning me as soon as you think you see the moment approaching.

Repeated to Paris<sup>5</sup> and Berlin.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. These telegrams dealt with the attitude of the Czech and Sudeten press, of which the former was, in Mr. Newton's view, 'failing to prepare the public for large concessions which will be necessary if agreement is to be reached'. Mr. Newton proposed to mention the matter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>4</sup> No. 431.

<sup>5</sup> Sir E. Phipps was instructed at the same time to inform M. Bonnet of the instructions to Mr. Newton, and to ask him to instruct the French Minister to support Mr. Newton by speaking in the same sense. Sir E. Phipps reported on June 23 that M. Bonnet had promised to carry out this suggestion.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 178 Telegraphic [C 6200/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 22, 1938, 10.00 p.m.*

My telegram No. 176,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 3.

In order to meet these supposed tactics of M. Benes, the Sudeten leaders are reported to have the following course in mind:—

If after two or three days of talking no serious offer which might be a basis of a solution is made by the Czech Government, they will reveal the proposals of both sides in the foreign press and state the reasons why they refuse to entertain the proposals of the Government. Kundt considers that such a step will not lead to a break in the negotiations and says that it is merely intended to prevent an unfair onus being placed on the Sudetendeutsch and to thwart Benes's policy of procrastination.

2. They have been told in reply that any such publicity at the present stage would be bound to have a harmful effect, and that we hoped it would not be indulged in without further notice.

<sup>1</sup> No. 432.

No. 434

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 23)*

*No. 307 Telegraphic [C 6218/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *June 22, 1938*

My telegram No. 306.<sup>1</sup>

I spoke to the Minister for Foreign Affairs today for an hour on the subject of the Sudeten negotiations and especially of attitude of Czech press. I showed and left with him two more striking examples of unfortunate press articles.

2. Dr. Krofta was inclined to defend the press attitude and even said that he found it difficult to take exception to the remarks in these articles. I thereupon pointed out one or two sentences which I read at random seemed to be most ill-chosen, e.g. one that said that compromise was no more possible than it would be between fire and water and a reference at very beginning of another article to Herr Henlein as living microphone of Berlin. Quite apart from the actual sentences which could no doubt be explained away, general tone and effect could only suggest to Czech reader that a settlement was neither possible nor desirable. Nothing was said of what could be granted and emphasis was laid on what could not be granted. After advice which he himself, President of the Council and President of the Republic had given to press I was the more disappointed and seriously concerned. Colleagues with whom I had spoken had also been struck by the unconciliatory nature of press comment. Its continuance would rouse doubts whether Czechoslovakia was serious in its endeavours to solve the very difficult problems confronting

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 432, note 3.



the country and if so whether Czechoslovakian democracy had sufficient discipline and insight for the purpose. Dr. Krofta still tried to explain press reports as due to provocation received and necessity for keeping negotiations confidential so that the press could not mention concessions which would be granted.

3. As regards negotiations themselves Minister for Foreign Affairs assured me that good progress was being made and that when he attended meeting of Political Committee of the Cabinet of which he has not hitherto been a regular member, he was himself surprised at the change in the attitude of his colleagues and at their realization of necessity for large concessions. When I asked when this progress was likely to become visible Dr. Krofta became evasive and dwelt on the complexities and difficulties of the task. I then repeated arguments used at my last interview with the President of the Council (see my telegram No. 226 Saving).<sup>2</sup> I stressed the importance of registering agreement on certain points in very near future suggesting as an example the matter of language. This presumably did not require to be fitted into any particular framework of self-administration and had, I had been glad to notice, been referred to in this morning's press (see my telegram No. 239 Saving).<sup>3</sup> To my disappointment Dr. Krofta replied that language was a question on which Czech public opinion was particularly sensitive so that although the Government were prepared to make big concessions time would be required. It involved moreover a change in the Constitution.

4. I observed that Czechoslovak Republic had after all now had twenty years, that on my first arrival here I had been informed of the importance of decisions of February 1937<sup>4</sup> which so far appeared to have had no substantial result, that President himself had told me that changes which might otherwise have come gradually must after the 'Anschluss' be made quickly and that on May 7<sup>5</sup> the French Minister and I had made strong representations in that sense. I realized the difficulty and believed progress was being made but what was there yet to show? Dr. Krofta seemed somewhat taken aback and explained that he was stressing difficulties in order to be on safe side and in order not, as he hinted Dr. Hodza sometimes did, to promise more than could be performed. Dr. Krofta repeated as I was taking my leave that if he was cautious it was in order not to disappoint and I in turn explained that if I had used plain and vigorous language it was with the object of assisting him.

5. For all his excellent qualities of frankness and sincerity Dr. Krofta is rather wooden and unreceptive but I hope that I may have shaken him and that some of my representations will materialize. The real decisions in matters of policy lie with the President, M. Benes, and with Dr. Hodza who has how-

<sup>2</sup> No. 426.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. This telegram (which was received by bag on June 24) reported (1) an article in the news-sheet of the Sudeten German party, (2) an official communiqué referring to an official discussion of the draft of the Language Law.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. the Agreement between the Government and the Activist parties of February 18, 1937, whereby the Government undertook to remedy certain minority grievances. See No. 160, paragraph 3.

<sup>5</sup> See above, No. 192.

ever to carry his coalition Cabinet with him. From a well-informed source I hear that Dr. Hodza had difficulties during the week-end with certain Ministers notably Dr. Sramek but succeeded in gaining his way.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 435

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 23)*  
*No. 308 Telegraphic [C 6232/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 23, 1938

Your telegram No. 170 Point 4<sup>1</sup> and your telegram No. 202<sup>2</sup> to Paris.

I am inclined to agree with Czechoslovak Minister in London and have certainly never noticed that President Benes resents our pressure and advice. His recent protest to which the Minister for Foreign Affairs has also briefly alluded in conversation with me was directed against suspicions and allegations that he is himself a reactionary whereas Dr. Benes claims to have taken a leading and in fact decisive part in overcoming the resistance of the reactionaries to be found now chiefly in clerical and national alliance party on the right.

2. I quite agree that it may be useful for Dr. Benes and in any case very desirable that strong pressure on him should be maintained especially as Dr. Krofta in this matter is not very helpful or influential. I propose therefore to apply for another audience during next week but of course it adds weight to my words if I can say that my application is made in accordance with your desire and if I can perhaps also deliver some message.

3. The Sudeten German leader Herr Frank is coming at his own request to see me next Saturday.

Repeated Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram gave a summary of the interview reported in No. 418; point 4 referred to the matter covered in paragraph 3.

<sup>2</sup> No. 420.

No. 436

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 24)*  
*No. 310 Telegraphic [C 6311/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 23, 1938

My despatch No. 216.<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that the thirteen Sudeten German demands as summed up in Czechoslovak Government memorandum correspond to those marked from two to fourteen in second memorandum enclosed in my despatch No. 206.<sup>2</sup>

2. Government comments offer objections both of principle and practice which may be briefly summarized as follows:

<sup>1</sup> This despatch transmitted the memorandum printed in Appendix III. <sup>2</sup> No. 415.

(1) The Sudeten German programme being based on Nationalist Socialist ideas is fundamentally inconsistent with Czechoslovakian democratic system, constitution and outlook.

(2) Its realization involving a fundamental reconstruction of the state would require months if not years to discuss.

(3) It would tend to break up territorial unity of the state.

(4) It would reduce functions of state in favour of 'self-administration' to such an extent as to render the former in effect powerless.

(5) It would be inapplicable to small minorities.

3. Nevertheless on points seven to thirteen of those enumerated Government think that a satisfactory solution could be found though even on these they are not prepared to accept the whole of the Sudeten German demands; for example that only Germans should serve in German districts. As for the rest Government are seeking compromise which would give satisfaction to Sudeten Germans without compromising unity of the state and fundamental principles of Czech democracy. For example they are studying measures for administrative decentralization so as to increase autonomy of municipalities, districts and provinces. In this respect they are ready to go further than was proposed in their first memorandum (see my despatch No. 206).

4. While I am not in a position to say how far the Sudeten German party are prepared to compromise on their demands I fear that this memorandum can only confirm improbability of any agreement being reached between the two sides on the questions of greatest importance: for both sides approach the question from fundamentally opposed points of view. Government still hope to run the state as a single unit on the basis of individual citizens; the Sudeten Germans wish to split it up into separate national units under cover of which they would be able to manage their own affairs on Nationalist Socialist lines.

Repeated to Berlin.

#### No. 437

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 24)*

*No. 283 Telegraphic [C 6293/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 23, 1938

For last ten days the German press has shown comparative moderation over Czechoslovakia. The question has not been entirely lost sight of, but it has been relegated to back pages and there has been greater absence of polemics than at any time since the beginning of the crisis.

Nevertheless I notice specific signs of restiveness at the absence of any definite reports of progress from Prague. Hitherto this has found expression in messages quoting Italian and Hungarian press as criticising dilatory tactics of the Czechoslovak Government. There is also tonight a message from Warsaw quoting officially [*sic* ? official] Polish agency as complaining that Comintern is trying to wreck the negotiations.

The lull has . . .<sup>1</sup> a favourable opportunity for making step forward towards a comprehensive settlement. If it is missed, the press campaign is certain to recommence, thus rendering agreement still more difficult. We shall thus find ourselves in a vicious circle from which escape will be more difficult than ever.

Meanwhile I continue to press German Government to show patience and moderation. I spoke in this sense to Field-Marshal Göring yesterday and laid particular stress on M. Benes's sincerity and good intentions.

Repeated to Paris [? and Prague].<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>2</sup> [? and Prague.]

#### No. 438

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 27)*

*No. 53 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6401/1941/18]*

WARSAW, June 23, 1938

My despatch No. 205.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning expressed to me the opinion that whereas a few weeks ago the situation in Czechoslovakia was looked upon too tragically it was now being regarded with too much optimism. He felt that it was dangerous for Czechoslovak Government to continue indefinitely their temporizing tactics. He mentioned for instance that whereas M. Hodza had promised to receive representatives of Polish minority he had put off their visit four times and he felt it was essential that Czechoslovakia should no longer delay giving satisfaction to demands of Sudeten and other minorities. I pointed out to M. Beck that it was not reasonable to expect Czechoslovak Government to produce a minority statute which would satisfy all concerned in a few days. I added that sympathy should be felt for their difficulties. M. Beck, as I expected, referred to Slovak question and pointed out that if authorities at Prague were so short-sighted as not to be able to come to an understanding with Slovaks it was even less likely that they could reach agreement with Sudeten Germans.

German Ambassador who had seen M. Beck just before me and was lunching with me afterwards told me he had hitherto been of opinion that in the event of Czechoslovakia being involved in hostilities with Germany the Poles would at once seize Teschen but that they had no ulterior designs regarding Slovakia. He had this morning attempted to draw M. Beck on the subject and had as a result of his conversation modified his views regarding Polish policy in this respect. He now felt misgivings that Polish Government entertained hope either of bringing Slovakia into some sort of federalization with Poland or of obtaining a common frontier with Hungary in the event of disintegration of Czechoslovakia.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 410.

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 1)*

*No. 644 [C 6537/1941/18]*

BERLIN, *June 23, 1938*

My Lord,

Field-Marshal Göring invited me yesterday afternoon to Karinhall, and, in between driving round the woods to inspect his young elk and having tea with Frau Göring, discussed a great variety of subjects from Austrian debts to the latest persecution of the Jews. In the end, however, every subject came back either to the necessity for an understanding with Britain or to the problem of Czechoslovakia. I had not seen the Field-Marshal for several months, and I was struck by his preoccupation in these two respects. No other subjects could hold his attention for more than a few moments.

2. I find it almost impossible to give a connected account of a conversation which lasted for over three hours and in the course of which little that was new or original was said. Of all the German leaders with whom I have talked at any length in Berlin, Field-Marshal Göring has always, with the possible exception of Field-Marshal Blomberg, been the most ardent advocate of an Anglo-German understanding. In the course of the year that I have known him, he has become more and more pessimistic as to the prospect of its realisation. Nevertheless, I believe him still to be no less genuinely anxious for it than he was. We agree absolutely as to its expediency in principle from every point of view, but we continue to disagree as to how it can be achieved. The basis, so far as the Field-Marshal is concerned, would naturally be British acquiescence in the realisation of German unity and in the predominance of German influence in Central and Eastern Europe.

3. The Field-Marshal was, for instance, chiefly concerned yesterday to prove that Czechoslovakia was an untenable proposition, and that the incorporation of the Sudeten areas in the Reich was sooner or later inevitable; that the question of the future of the Sudeten was, on the one hand, not one which directly affected Britain herself, and, on the other, the only remaining obstacle to discussion between our two countries of those questions which really did concern and interest us both. For my part, I attempted to convince the Field-Marshal that His Majesty's Government could never disinterest themselves in any question which might lead to a disturbance of world peace; that our aims in Central Europe were not anti-German, but anti-war, that we were sincere and determined in our mediating action at Prague, and that if Germany really wished for an understanding with England she must help us to achieve peaceful solutions based on the just settlements which we were seeking not only in Czechoslovakia, but in Spain, and that on German moderation and on Anglo-German co-operation in these two danger zones depended, in my opinion, the possibility of undertaking with any hope of success later direct negotiations with a view to achieving a better understanding between England and Germany.

4. According to the Field-Marshal, in spite of the moderation of Henlein,



Dr. Benes would never go far enough to satisfy the Sudeten; even if a formal agreement was reached the Czechs would never honourably implement it; self-administration in the Sudeten areas would mean at least Sudeten police; the Sudeten would never tolerate being overawed by the perpetual maintenance of Czech garrisons in those areas; it was not the Germans of the Reich but the Sudeten themselves who would make trouble; or if it was not the Sudeten it would be the Magyars or the Poles; that if an incident occurred in which twenty to thirty Sudeten were shot down by Czech soldiery, Hitler would be obliged at all costs to intervene; that, if that occurred and France mobilised, he hoped Great Britain would remain neutral so as still to be able to act as an intermediary; that Poland and Hungary would be on Germany's side in the event of war with Czechoslovakia; that Yugoslavia would not move, and that it would be absurd for Roumania to do so if her ally Poland was on the other side, and so on and so forth. For once the Field-Marshal refrained from all bluster of any kind. He seemed, in fact, more depressed and anxious and less confident than I have ever known him.

5. To the above and many other similar observations I replied in what seemed to me the most appropriate form. I laid particular stress on my belief, based on all the information at my disposal, in the good faith of Benes himself. I declined to discuss the details of a settlement, but impressed on the Field-Marshal the delicacy of our task and the sincerity of our desire to secure a solution which would be just both to the Sudeten and the Czechs. I pointed out that, while His Majesty's Government could not accept the responsibility for the exact terms of the settlement, our desire was to secure as great a measure of cultural and other autonomy for the Sudeten as was compatible with the maintenance of the sovereignty of the State. I emphasised that we could not support, for instance, the creation of a State within a State. In particular, I urged that, if Benes and Henlein were unable to agree, Germany should show the utmost moderation and wisdom to help us, if possible and if needs be, to find an outlet to any deadlock which might ensue.

6. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's representative at Prague.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 440

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 24)*

*No. 311 Telegraphic [C 6314/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 24, 1938

Your telegram No. 176,<sup>1</sup> paragraphs 4, 5 and 8.

My telegram No. 310.<sup>2</sup>

1. We are still (officially) unaware of what Sudeten German Party have proposed (except for brief summary contained in the Government com-

<sup>1</sup> No. 432.

<sup>2</sup> No. 436.

mentary) and though we know views of the Government on the Sudeten proposals we are also ignorant of what precisely they themselves have in mind to offer. We can therefore continue to reiterate the view that 'speedy and far-reaching offers by Czechoslovakian Government are essential if the present negotiations are not to reach a dangerous deadlock' without expressing an opinion on their proposals and without defining what we ourselves have in mind as a reasonable solution. Czechoslovak Government have hitherto carefully refrained from asking our advice on that point or from availing themselves of offer of good offices contained in your telegram No. 49<sup>3</sup> and they may fear to be embarrassed by nature of our eventual reply.

2. We must nevertheless now be prepared for them to round on us and ask what we ourselves consider a reasonable settlement. Moreover should they do so, it may afford us an opportunity for making a proposal for mediation. We could reply that we must have views of both sides and on receiving them we could say issues involved were clearly so complicated that we should need to send out a special investigator in order to be able to tender the best informed and most helpful advice.

3. The most thorny issue which appears to be emerging is that the Sudeten German Party while purporting to offer an alternative to a federal system are in fact demanding what amounts to the same thing coupled with additional complication of a 'personal autonomy'. To the latter nearest kind of analogy may be system practised in old days in Turkey or extraterritorial system in China. To the former it occurs to me that régime at Memel may afford some precedent. In theory there may be good deal to be said in favour of a solution which would have merit of allowing the two mutually antagonistic races to live side by side without one everlastingly impinging upon concerns of the other. But in the present state of national feelings it would obviously be full of danger for independent existence of Czechoslovakia. On the other hand the Sudeten German Party will probably be satisfied with nothing less since as far back as 1919 demands were made in a largely similar sense while even in last century the German Liberals were asking for institution of separate national cantons in Bohemia. Unfortunately it is impossible to predict that the Sudeten Germans would (? not) use federalism as more than a stage towards disruption of Czechoslovakia though it is just possible that they might prefer autonomy within Czechoslovakia to absorption by the Reich when they would presumably be no better treated than Austrians. My intuitive feeling is however that it is not so much positive desire for self-administration that actuates them as negative desire to be rid of Czech control. They might well continue to consider national freedom in the German sense could only reach its full fruition if they were part of the Reich.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> No. 133.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 24)*

*No. 312 Telegraphic [C 6315/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 24, 1938

Your telegram No. 176,<sup>1</sup> paragraphs 6 and 7 and my telegram No. 307.<sup>2</sup>

Troublesome as process may be for all concerned, I think I had better make the round once more by visiting also Dr. Hodza over the week-end, if only to obtain latest information on the negotiations before my audience. It would probably be difficult for the President to receive me before the beginning of next week but in any case it may be useful to have seen beforehand Herr Frank who is due to call on Saturday and for you to have time to telegraph any comments on my despatches Nos. 206<sup>3</sup> and 216<sup>4</sup> and my telegrams Nos. 310<sup>5</sup> and 311.<sup>6</sup> I shall feel on strong ground in complaining to the President of delinquencies and deficiencies of Czech press and especially so in view of relative moderation of German press reported in Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 283.<sup>7</sup> I would hesitate however to suggest if Czechoslovak Government makes concessions on nine out of twelve points public opinion in Great Britain will still blame Czechoslovak Government in the event of a rupture over the other three. I would propose therefore to put it to President Benes that at least we shall expect him to exhaust his potential concessions in fact as well as in theory before there can be any question of a deadlock.

2. Subject to your views on my telegram No. 311 I might add you will expect to be consulted after that before outstanding difficulties are allowed to lead to a rupture. You might then think fit also to convey a similar intimation to Sudeten German leaders.<sup>8</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 432.

<sup>2</sup> No. 434.

<sup>3</sup> No. 415.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. See No. 436, note 1.

<sup>5</sup> No. 436.

<sup>6</sup> No. 440.

<sup>7</sup> No. 437.

<sup>8</sup> On June 27 (telegram No. 182) Mr. Newton was informed that the Secretary of State concurred in the language he proposed to use with Dr. Benes as set out in the last sentence of paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 of this telegram, and that 'if pressed in the manner you suggest in paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 311 (No. 440) you may hint at the possibility of offering to put at the disposal of both parties a mediator of the kind and for the purpose outlined in my telegram No. 174 (No. 425) but you should not actually make the offer without further instructions'.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 181 Telegraphic [C 6232/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 24, 1938

Your telegram No. 308,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 2.

1. In view of my telegram No. 176<sup>2</sup> you can certainly say that you are asking for interview on my instructions. You may also present the com-

<sup>1</sup> No. 435.

<sup>2</sup> No. 432.

munication you are instructed to make to the President as a message from myself if you think this would be helpful.

2. If so, you might add that I naturally accept M. Benes's assurances as contained in your telegram No. 293,<sup>3</sup> but for that very reason I feel justified in suggesting that the best way of controverting the rumours which are current would be if M. Benes were to show that he is himself taking the lead in pressing for an early settlement, notwithstanding the concessions which this will involve.<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> No. 402.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Newton telegraphed on the night of June 26-7 that President Benes was receiving him on the afternoon of June 27.

### No. 443

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 26)*

*No. 314 Telegraphic [C 6377/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 25, 1938

My telegram No. 308.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Frank, Henlein's deputy who is commonly considered to be very radical, called today for a long and friendly talk. He was evidently anxious to make a good impression and betrayed no particular extremism nor even impatience with the pace of negotiations.

2. He said that Sudeten Germans' memoranda were being kept strictly confidential though of course the time might come when it would be necessary to publish them in order to show good faith and moderation of the party. He said that a copy had been communicated to your Department and that another with which I did not however ask to be supplied was at my disposal. Our conversation was on general lines. He assured me that party honestly wished for a settlement within the present frontiers of their home land but insisted that settlement must be fundamental and that the present negotiations represented a last attempt. He said that it was important that both reactionary politicians and broad masses of Czech people should be educated to the necessity for large changes.

3. I pointed out that the Sudeten German leaders now had opportunity themselves of educating various members of the Cabinet including Dr. Sramek with whom they were now in direct contact. As regards public opinion generally I quite agreed that there had been certain deficiencies in the press though there had been some examples such as recent article in 'Pritomnost'<sup>2</sup> of a favourable character. This Herr Frank admitted and I took the opportunity of suggesting that although the Sudeten German press had not been actually hostile of late it might also cooperate towards improvement of the atmosphere by a showing on occasion some appreciation of the difficulties of the other side.

<sup>1</sup> No. 435.

<sup>2</sup> A Czech weekly.

4. Herr Frank touched on the point made in the first paragraph of your telegram No. 176<sup>3</sup> that the Government press had been giving too optimistic an account of negotiations. He seemed to accept my suggestion that this might be a fault on the right side, and at any rate better than neglect of which 'Die Zeit' had complained not many days ago, see my telegram No. 224 Saving.<sup>4</sup> Herr Frank alluded to the fact that the draft of the Nationality Statute, of which so much had been made, had never been shown to Sudeten German representatives. I suggested the reason might be that Dr. Hodza was prepared to modify and extend it so far as possible to include the Sudeten German requirements, and that the fact that the Government seemed to have taken the Sudeten German memoranda as agenda for discussions was favourable to the party rather than otherwise. I said I believed the Government themselves realised that there might have been too much advertisement of the Statute, but at the same time it might be easier for the Government to secure acceptance of concessions if they eventually appeared in the clothing of the Nationality Statute.

5. I expressed hope that if the Government did at any time make counter-proposals care would be taken by both parties to avoid the development of a crisis if counter-proposals could not be accepted. Herr Frank thereupon commended the recent procedure of Dr. Hodza in keeping his recent Landtag proposals entirely private. They were quite unacceptable for the Sudeten Party if only because the German Curia could at any time be outvoted by the other members of Landtag. He understood the matter was being further discussed in the Cabinet and in the newly enlarged committee of negotiators, and seemed to think something might emerge which would then be further discussed in the former smaller committee.

6. A matter causing serious concern to the Sudeten Party, said Herr Frank, was the economic situation in the autumn when a considerable increase in unemployment in the Sudeten area is feared. I explained that there seemed to have been signs of an economic recession in most countries, and that its origin seemed to lie in North America. He replied that he did not wish to make any complaint against the Czechoslovak Government under this head but only to draw attention to the importance of any measures possible being taken. He said the Sudeten Party were investigating schemes, and I suggested to him that they should try to collaborate with the Government departments concerned which he said they would perhaps do so soon as their own investigations had proceeded far enough. Matter is one which I can perhaps mention in some official quarter.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> No. 432.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 27)*

*No. 316 Telegraphic [C 6368/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 27, 1938, 1.10 a.m.

My telegrams Nos. 312<sup>1</sup> and 309.<sup>2</sup>

1. A long conversation today June 26 with President of the Council developed at the close into a heart to heart talk. Dr. Hodza appealed to me for all help which could be given to him in the immediate future. Emphasising that he was speaking quite unofficially and most confidentially he admitted that he was having difficulties with his colleagues and said that it might make just the difference if we could use all possible influence both on his own people to go further and on Henlein party to accept a reasonable compromise and not give their demands the character of an ultimatum.

2. His recent Landtag proposals had been rejected and he realised that Government must go further. His idea now seemed to be to give the proposed Curia certain economic and social spheres in which it could be independent of the rest of Landtag and could not therefore be outvoted. Negative safeguards could also be granted by prescribing a majority in access [? excess] of 50 per cent. for some measures and by giving certain rights of veto.

3. In reply to my enquiries he did not absolutely reject demand for allotment of a definite national territory but he did say that it would open great difficulties and grave dangers mentioning two examples. First a Seyss-Inquart might arise. Secondly the non-Germans and an important number of German inhabitants who were now carried away by racial enthusiasm without being Nazi at heart would be terrorized over by Henlein party whatever safeguards were nominally established.

4. I asked Dr. Hodza how we could best help. In particular seeing that my own activities and those of my French colleague were naturally limited would he like me to talk to any particular member of the Government or perhaps to General Krejci (whom I know fairly well from shooting expeditions). Dr. Hodza said that the last was unnecessary. Soldiers were of course concerned with war but not with politics and they would obey orders. In this respect President Benes had been very helpful to him. Eventually M. Bechyne, Vice-President of the Council, and a Social Democrat and M. Franke, Minister of Instruction, and a leader of Czech Nationalist Socialists, the former of M. Benes's party, were suggested. The latter I hope to meet on a social occasion tomorrow night.

5. I asked whether it would be helpful if statements could be made in Parliament or if judicious articles appeared in the English press but Dr.

<sup>1</sup> No. 441.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 23 Mr. Newton reported that the Czechoslovak Government proposed to deal with the 'inacceptable' demand for a Volkstag by reconstructing provincial assemblies on the lines of the previous Austrian frontier. Thus the former Landtag for Moravia had three *curiae*, representing respectively, in addition to the landed proprietors, the German and Czech nationalities.

Hodza feared effect on Henlein party would be bad. On the other hand private messages or conversations between representatives and leaders of public opinion in our two countries might be most timely and helpful. I am however very much afraid that members of P.E.N. Club just arriving and some of the visitors invited next week to the Sokol festivities, including Sir Walter Layton, Dr. Wickham Steed and the Duchess of Atholl, may not represent opinion in England which will be decisive in an issue of peace or war and that they may stiffen the Czech resistance rather than convince Czechs in taking a strong lead [? on] the vital importance of really going to the utmost limit and of doing so now. Sir G. Clerk is however said to be coming and perhaps his aid could be enlisted. His memory is still fresh in many circles and held in high regard so that his counsel would carry much weight. Professor Harold Temperley and Professor Seton Watson are other prospective visitors. Possibly Mr. Arthur Henderson and Mr. Cazalet who were recently here could help by sending good advice to friends here and other names may be handed to the Foreign Office.

6. Dr. Hodza said that it would also be useful if, of course without mention of himself, Czechoslovak Minister in London were summoned to the Foreign Office if possible tomorrow Monday and informed of the impatience felt by His Majesty's Government at the absence of results and of the grave consequences to be expected if Czechoslovak Government failed to go not merely fast enough but above all far enough.<sup>3</sup>

7. Equally President of Council feels it to be of great importance that anything possible should be done to influence Sudeten party to be reasonable in their demands. He realises that such spirits of unreason and extremism have been raised up that this may be genuinely difficult for them and meant courage but if the two sides are to agree some readiness to compromise on their part will be indispensable.<sup>4</sup>

Repeated Berlin and Paris.

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with this suggestion, Lord Halifax spoke to the Czechoslovak Minister on June 28 upon the importance which His Majesty's Government attached both to 'the rate of progress and to the size of concessions to be made'. See No. 454.

<sup>4</sup> In a further telegram (No. 318) of June 27, Mr. Newton reported that he had given to Dr. Hodza his own opinion that the use made of the present lull might prove decisive for peace or war, and for the future existence of Czechoslovakia. If the Czechoslovaks failed to go to the limit of what was possible, English public opinion would be unsympathetic, and this fact in turn might have an important influence on France's interpretation of her obligations.

#### No. 445

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*  
*No. 288 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 6383/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 27, 1938, 6.40 p.m.

I have been exercising continuous pressure here through variety of channels with a view to keeping the German press within reasonable bounds in the matter of Czechoslovakia. German attitude is that unless press agitation is

kept up here British mediation at Prague will be relaxed and Czechoslovak Government will do nothing. I have combatted this theory and I have some faint hope that present comparative moderation may continue for another week but doubt that it will last beyond that term if before then there has been no development at Prague to indicate serious and definite intention of M. Benes to agree to some form of *comprehensive* settlement and not to a mere paper scheme based on concessions of detail.

One cannot but fear that M. Benes, possibly under the impression that he is gaining time, is in fact losing it. While there is obviously grave possibility that comprehensive scheme may end in ultimate loss of Sudeten areas there is on the other hand absolute certainty that anything less can never either satisfy Sudeten or provide permanent solution. There is also equally obvious and grave risk that M. Benes even if he appreciates this, an assumption which present trend of negotiations scarcely justifies, may delay too long.

I gather from the Czechoslovak Minister—though he spoke personally—that it may be the intention of the Czechoslovak Government if agreement cannot be reached before then to submit to Parliament in a fortnight's time their own Nationality Statute embodying such concessions as they may have accepted but disregarding points on which no agreement has been reached. Such a 'take it or leave it' decision will of course produce serious situation here besides putting His Majesty's Government into serious dilemma in which we should have either to admit failure of our mediation at Prague or to support the Czech action.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 446

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 28, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 319 Telegraphic [C 6402/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 27, 7.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 316.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of this conversation which took place at the private house of the President of the Council, and lasted for over an hour and a half, Dr. Hodza said that he must proceed now with great circumspection because on the Sudeten side he understood from Herr Kundt that radicalism was growing and on the Czech side there were also difficulties. Dr. Hodza admitted the shortcomings of the press but thought that there would now be an improvement. He mentioned incidentally that he was receiving much assistance from Dr. Karel Capek.

2. While Czechoslovak Government were ready to grant rights and safeguards for individuals they could not confer them on the National Groups. To do so would create a state within a state or even a state alongside the state. The President of the Council proceeded to explain that in addition to Landtag proposals the communes and administrative districts would be

<sup>1</sup> No. 444.

given increased powers which in Sudeten area would of course be exercised by the Sudeten German Party which had obtained 86 per cent. of the German vote in the recent elections. The Germans would find that these were very real concessions and he believed there was probably already a majority amongst them which had had enough of recent agitation and extremism. He was most anxious to obtain a definite solution for the whole question now. It would have to be on a compromise basis but he was determined that the settlement should be genuine. In fact if the Government would not go as far as he thought necessary he would resign.

3. I reverted to the question of achieving some results at least without further delay observing that if various cooks at work could not complete at once the principal dish at least they should produce something to meet the growing impatience and hunger of expectant beneficiaries. Dr. Hodza seemed fairly confident that if he could not solve the main problem he would certainly put through important if minor matters which the Government were already prepared to concede. In particular he mentioned reform of Language Law. For the immediate future he seemed to contemplate that at the worst there would be a partial settlement for introduction into Parliament next month and that this would if inadequate have to be followed by further negotiations on the bigger issues in the early autumn.

4. I took the opportunity of giving Dr. Hodza an account of my conversation with Herr Frank on the lines recorded in my telegram No. 314.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hodza seemed to be content with the explanation of the Government attitude in various respects which I had ventured to suggest to Herr Frank. I made due mention of the appeal for economic assistance. I also read to Dr. Hodza Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 153.<sup>3</sup> I referred furthermore to the allusions in the press to Austrian difficulties and suggested that it would be rash to assume that such difficulties even if serious would mean a longer respite for Czechoslovakia.

On the contrary the inference might be that Czechoslovakia would provide a convenient distraction.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris Saving.

<sup>2</sup> No. 443.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently in error for telegram No. 283, see No. 437.

#### No. 447

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 28)*

*No. 747 [C 6378 1941 18]*

PARIS, June 27, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, with reference to your telegram No. 150 Saving<sup>1</sup> of June 24, copy of the memorandum given by

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram instructed Sir E. Phipps to 'remind M. Bonnet that you have not yet received a copy of the memorandum given to M. Osusky, nor of the reply he brought back from Prague'.

M. Bonnet to M. Osusky on June 9 prior to the latter's recent visit to Prague.

2. In sending me this document, M. Bonnet's Chef de Cabinet has explained that M. Osusky brought no written communication back with him to Paris, but contented himself with giving M. Bonnet an assurance that the claims of the Sudeten Deutsche would be examined.

3. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Minister at Prague.

I have &c.,  
ERIC PHIPPS

ENCLOSURE IN No. 447

*Remis à M. Osusky le 9 juin, 1938.*

*Aide-Mémoire.*

Les démarches répétées du Gouvernement britannique à Prague ont traduit la préoccupation croissante que causait à Londres la lenteur avec laquelle se développent les négociations engagées entre le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque et les représentants sudètes. La même préoccupation se reflète dans les comptes-rendus donnés par l'Ambassadeur de France à Londres de tous les entretiens qu'il a eus au cours des derniers mois avec le Secrétaire d'État et ses collaborateurs.

L'ensemble des indications recueillies par M. Corbin montre que les propositions esquissées à Londres par M. Henlein ont vivement frappé les milieux britanniques en ce qu'elles étaient dégagées de toute question de politique étrangère et de toute idéologie nationale-socialiste. Tarder à négocier et à conclure sur cette base serait, pour le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque, s'exposer à perdre les avantages d'une situation qui, pour être encore favorable à l'heure actuelle, n'en reste pas moins à la merci du premier incident nouveau.

2. L'action si effective exercée par le Gouvernement britannique en faveur de la Tchécoslovaquie n'a pu se justifier dans l'opinion anglaise que par la perspective d'un accommodement équitable, compréhensif et rapide. Toutes les indications qui parviennent de Londres montrent que le retard apporté à la solution escomptée déçoit dangereusement les espoirs de l'opinion et remet en cause les sympathies qu'avait éveillées l'attitude compréhensive du Gouvernement tchécoslovaque.

3. A l'heure actuelle, le Gouvernement français ignore encore la nature exacte et la portée des réformes dont le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque est disposé à faire la base du nouveau statut des nationalités. Toutefois, un revirement de l'opinion britannique aurait à ses yeux une telle portée qu'il croit nécessaire, sans plus attendre, de rendre une fois de plus le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque attentif au risque grave qu'il y aurait à décourager ou à décevoir les espoirs sur lesquels s'est fondée l'action solidaire franco-britannique en faveur de la Tchécoslovaquie. Tout délai ou toute restriction imputable au Gouvernement tchécoslovaque risquerait d'entraîner des conséquences néfastes en renforçant l'action des éléments qui, dans les divers pays intéressés, militent en faveur d'une politique de réserve et d'abstention.



4. Du point de vue tchécoslovaque, qu'il s'agisse du statut des nationalités, de leurs relations culturelles ou du recrutement des fonctionnaires, il apparaîtrait en tout état de cause essentiel de tendre à l'institution d'un régime dont il apparaisse clairement aux intéressés, quelle que soit l'origine ethnique dont ils se réclament, qu'ils ne sauraient en fait en retrouver les avantages hors de l'État tchécoslovaque.

5. Il apparaît donc essentiel et urgent que la maîtrise dont le Gouvernement tchécoslovaque a fait preuve depuis le début de la crise se traduise dès maintenant par des décisions effectives et concrètes qui répondent aussi bien à l'attente de l'opinion mondiale qu'aux nécessités d'une situation dont le règlement ne peut plus se faire attendre.

#### No. 448

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 28, 3.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 323 Telegraphic [C 6420/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 28, 1938, 1.17 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 316<sup>1</sup> and 317.<sup>2</sup>

1. My French colleague whom I informed in strictest confidence of Dr. Hodza's appeal had an interview with him on June 27 very shortly afterwards. M. de Lacroix told me subsequently that appeal was not repeated to him so I impressed upon him once more its most confidential nature and how extremely embarrassing it would be for Dr. Hodza if it were known that he had done something which as he himself said might be regarded as treasonable. My French colleague intends therefore to mention it to Quai d'Orsay by letter rather than in a telegram which might be given too wide a distribution. Dr. Hodza gave my French colleague the impression that he was determined to push negotiations through to some result by the end of this week.

2. The list of Sokol English guests is no doubt obtainable at Czechoslovak Legation, London. If Dr. Hodza is trying to bring things to a head at the end of this week, while coming days may be very important, next week may be equally critical or perhaps even more so in the case of the Henlein party.

3. My audience has now been fixed for today. I have arranged later in the day also to see Minister of Instruction M. Franke (not to be confused with Sudeten German Deputy).

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 444.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that he had given the French Minister a general indication of the position and that he intended as soon as possible to talk to him at greater length. Mr. Newton also reported that the French Minister was without instructions from Paris. Sir E. Phipps was therefore instructed (by telegram No. 155 Saving) on the evening of June 27 to try to persuade M. Bonnet to fulfil without further delay his promise to instruct the French Minister to support Mr. Newton.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 29, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 324 Telegraphic [C 6444/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, June 28, 1938, 8.15 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 181<sup>1</sup> and 182.<sup>2</sup>

1. At audience today I made a communication<sup>3</sup> to President Benes in accordance with your instructions and in the form of a message from yourself leaving a transcript with him for further emphasis. He said that he had just received message in a similar sense from Czechoslovak Minister in London. I also read to him the whole of Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 283<sup>4</sup> and several passages from his telegram No. 288.<sup>5</sup> I emphasized strongly on two or three occasions during our conversation the necessity not only of making large concessions but of negotiating an *agreed* settlement if this were humanly possible.

2. President assured me that he would make every effort but I could not extract many grounds for optimism in thinking an agreed settlement probable. He is prepared to go a very long way to meet their demands but cannot accept them all. Assent to that for a national assembly is in his opinion absolutely out of the question although he is prepared to concede in reconstructed provincial assembly, a national Curia which in certain spheres could not be outvoted by the other members. President assured me that all the points which can be conceded will be agreed with Sudeten German representatives beforehand and arrangements will be made in regard to Parliamentary procedure so that the Sudeten German party can vote on different items of the Government's measures.

3. Although I reiterated the dangers to be anticipated if a comprehensive agreement cannot be secured Dr. Benes evidently has the fear which I share that although moderate Sudeten Germans may realize that the Government is going to the limit of what is possible they will not have the courage to stand up to the extremists and commit themselves to acceptance. The Government may therefore have no option but to proceed about the middle of next month with the introduction[?]into]Parliament of measures representing the maximum which they can give. At the end of my audience and more than once during its course I made it clear that you would expect to be consulted before there was a rupture but Dr. Benes showed no inclination to ask for advice or our services as a mediator. Nor in any case did he fear a rupture in the immediate future. While he did not know Dr. Hodza's exact programme he understood Sudeten representatives perhaps fearing an unfavourable atmosphere had themselves suggested there should be no meetings today owing to Sokol festivities.

4. I suggest the time has come to apply whatever pressure may be possible also on Sudeten German party and in Berlin if there is to be any hope of a reasonable compromise consistent with effective unity of the State.

<sup>1</sup> No. 442.

<sup>3</sup> See annex to No. 449.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 441, note 8.

<sup>4</sup> No. 437.

<sup>5</sup> No. 445.

Further details of my audience will be reported by telegraph tomorrow.  
Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

ANNEX TO No. 449<sup>1</sup>

Lord Halifax wishes me also as a further personal message from himself to inform His Excellency the President that he has been very much disquieted by the attitude of the Czech press. Before I had received instructions from London I had, as His Excellency may already know, spoken very strongly on the subject to Dr. Krofta, but Lord Halifax desires that I should also mention the matter in the highest quarters and point out how necessary it is that the press and the public should be educated to the need for a fundamental solution instead of, as has recently unfortunately been the case, being buoyed up with false optimism.

The British Government hold very strongly that speedy and far-reaching offers by the Czechoslovak Government are essential if the present negotiations are not to reach a dangerous deadlock. The situation and negotiations are being watched carefully and anxiously and, it should be added, critically, in England. The effect on public opinion would, as I was instructed to say a little while ago, undoubtedly be extremely serious if it were thought that any opportunity for a solution had been missed by failure on the part of the Czechoslovak Government to go to the extreme limit of what was possible—and to do so in time. Still less would it be understood if there were any omission to exhaust in fact the concessions which the Czechoslovak Government are believed to be already in a position to make.

<sup>1</sup> The text of this communication was enclosed by Mr. Newton in a covering despatch of June 29.

No. 450

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 29, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 198 Telegraphic [C 6434/1941/18]*

PARIS, June 28, 10.2 p.m.

Your telegram No. 155 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I urged Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly and left with him a memorandum.

I added verbally in strictest confidence gist of Dr. Hodza's appeal to Mr. Newton as reported in latter's telegram No. 316<sup>2</sup> and laid great stress on necessity for backing us up both by pressure on M. Benes by French Minister and by pressure here on M. Osusky. I also informed M. Bonnet of efforts being made in Berlin by Sir N. Henderson to moderate German press (see his telegram No. 288)<sup>3</sup> and pressed him to take necessary action forthwith.

I told His Excellency that Mr. Newton was seeing M. Benes to-day in order to urge again a speedy and comprehensive settlement.

M. Bonnet promised that necessary instructions should be sent at once to French Minister. He said that latter had derived impression from Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 448, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> No. 444.

<sup>3</sup> No. 445.

Newton that he rather felt that too much pressure on Czechoslovakia might defeat our own object and help to play the German game. M. Bonnet admitted however that this impression of French Minister was derived from a conversation with Mr. Newton over a fortnight ago and that since then situation had changed.

French Minister reports that M. Benes, whom he saw a day or two ago, seemed very much impressed and rather depressed at terms of memorandum brought to him by M. Osusky (copy enclosed in my despatch No. 747<sup>4</sup> of June 27). M. Benes remarked to him that he began to wonder whether France did not now feel that Czechoslovakia was becoming a burden to (her)<sup>5</sup> and whether French Government did not contemplate abandoning policy towards his country that they had followed, incidentally, for twenty years.

Repeated to Prague and Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> No. 447.

<sup>5</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 451

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 29, 6.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 289 Telegraphic [C 6460/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 29, 1938

Prague telegram No. 324,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 4.

As I have already reported I have been applying continuous and persistent pressure here through the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Field-Marshal Göring, Dr. Lammers, Himmler and many others. I have of course had to confine myself to generalities urging moderation, patience, etc., and assuring them that I have reason to believe that M. Benes means business.

At this stage I cannot do more until I know definitely what solution Czechoslovak Government propose and whether it is in fact reasonable and comprehensive. I am not even in a position to urge (see paragraph 3 of Prague telegram) that moderate Sudeten Germans realise that Czechoslovak Government is going to the limit which is possible.

Meanwhile there are mutterings confined to the provincial press complaining of dilatory tactics of the Czechoslovak Government.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 449.

### No. 452

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 158 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6167/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 29, 1938, 7.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 154 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

You will have seen from my telegram No. 174<sup>2</sup> to Prague that in view of the probable German objections to the proposal for an international com-

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram repeated telegram No. 182 to Prague. See No. 441, note 8.

<sup>2</sup> No. 425.

mission of investigation which was made in my telegram No. 172<sup>3</sup> to you, I am now considering the possibility of appointing a British mediator, who would try and reconcile the two parties, in the event of a deadlock in the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten Party.

In the event of a deadlock it would not be long before a dangerous position might arise and it is therefore important that if a mediator is to be appointed, he should be ready to intervene at once. I do not, however, propose at present to approach the Czechoslovak Government in the matter, since the knowledge that His Majesty's Government are prepared to appoint a mediator might make them less ready to reach agreement, inasmuch as they might feel able to get better terms through mediation than they would in direct negotiation with the Sudeten Germans. In approaching the Czechoslovak Government it would also be necessary to approach the Sudeten Party and inform the German Government, and to do this now would, I fear, give the impression that His Majesty's Government expect negotiations to fail, and would therefore discourage them from seeking to make them succeed.

I feel, however, that the French Government should be aware of what I have in mind. It may prove difficult to secure the services of the kind of expert I had proposed without laying ourselves open to the objections raised in paragraph 5 of Mr. Newton's telegram No. 304,<sup>4</sup> and I am therefore trying to obtain the assistance of some outstanding figure whose name would be known, not only in England, but also abroad. I am anxious to avoid committing His Majesty's Government to the support of any particular proposals and the mediator would therefore act in a purely independent capacity, with the task of endeavouring to reconcile the two opposing points of view.

I should be glad if you would explain to M. Bonnet the lines on which my mind is working.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> No. 422.

<sup>4</sup> No. 431.

### No. 453

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 271 Telegraphic [C 6293/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 29, 1938, 9.20 a.m.*

Your telegram No. 288.<sup>1</sup>

1. I was glad to read in the last paragraph of your telegram No. 283<sup>2</sup> that you had urged on Field-Marshal Göring the need for patience.

2. The task the Czechoslovak Government are engaged upon is exceptionally delicate and difficult, and it is impossible to expect that a complete solution can be found within a few weeks. I have, as you know, been pressing the Czechoslovak Government to announce as soon as possible such concessions as they are now ready to make. In these circumstances it would be unreasonable of the German Government, however much they may desire

<sup>1</sup> No. 445.

<sup>2</sup> No. 437.



to see quick results, to complain if the measures which the Czechoslovak Government introduce to Parliament in the middle of July embody only a partial settlement and do not constitute a full and final settlement.

3. I hope therefore that the German Government will show patience and restraint not only now but also when the Czechoslovak Government's offers and decisions are announced. I am sure you will do your utmost to impress upon them the importance of not condemning measures out of hand if they fail immediately to gratify all the Sudeten demands.

4. In this connexion you will see from the third paragraph of Mr. Newton's telegram No. 319<sup>3</sup> that the Czechoslovak Government's proposal to introduce into Parliament such concessions as they may have accepted does not indicate a desire on their part to adopt a take it or leave it attitude.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> No. 446.

#### No. 454

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 186 Telegraphic [C 6043/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 29, 1938, 9.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams No. 316<sup>1</sup> and No. 318.<sup>2</sup>

I approve the language you held to Dr. Hodza. I also approve the language you used with Herr Frank, as reported in your telegram No. 314.<sup>3</sup>

As regards paragraphs 5 and 6 of your telegram No. 316, steps are being taken with a view to ensuring that Sir Walter Layton, Dr. Wickham Steed and the Duchess of Atholl and Sir G. Clerk should, if they visit Prague, use language which will be helpful. I have already on June 28 spoken to the Czechoslovak Minister in the sense of the instructions contained in my telegram No. 176,<sup>4</sup> and steps are also being taken to influence the Sudeten Party in the sense suggested in paragraph 7 of your telegram No. 316.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 444.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 444, note 4.

<sup>3</sup> No. 443.

<sup>4</sup> No. 432.

#### No. 455

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 1)*  
*No. 258 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6526/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, *June 29, 1938*

Your telegram No. 181<sup>1</sup> and my telegram No. 324.<sup>2</sup>

When making my communication I informed President Benes that I had immediately telegraphed his remonstrance to you and wished now to inform him that you of course accepted and thanked him for his assurances. I also showed the President my telegram No. 293<sup>3</sup> as I wished him to be satisfied

<sup>1</sup> No. 442.

<sup>2</sup> No. 449.

<sup>3</sup> No. 402.

that I had done justice to his protest, which, after carefully reading my telegram, he assured me was the case. I went on to say that at the same time you wished to suggest, as I had indeed myself indicated at the time, that the best method of knocking the bottom out of these stories was to achieve results.

2. The President then gave me the following account of the present situation. Discussions took place last week between representatives of the whole Coalition Cabinet and the Sudeten German party in order to widen the area of contact and relieve the Prime Minister of the sole responsibility. Dr. Benes could tell me in confidence that the general impression on both sides was by no means catastrophic. The discussions had been reasonable and the Sudeten German representatives had been surprised at the reserve shown by Dr. Sramek and by the Socialist Ministers. Dr. Hodza had been able to conclude the meeting by saying that it was evident that in many questions they could agree.

3. The preparation of the final draft of the Government measures had now been entrusted to Dr. Hacha and Dr. Krejci, who had that very morning visited the President in this connexion. This draft, which might take a week to prepare, would then be presented to the representatives of all the nationalities. In reply to my enquiry Dr. Benes said he feared the Sudeten German representatives would not accept it because it would not include the Volkstag and certain National Socialist measures which they already knew the Government could not grant. On this amongst other occasions I emphasized to the President the importance of making every effort to secure an agreed settlement on all points on which agreement was possible and of giving no excuse for a complaint that the Government measures had been flung at their heads.

4. Dr. Benes did not exclude the possibility of agreement but pointed out at another stage in our conversation that undue delay in enacting the Government concessions would be fatal. He had heard confidentially from Sudeten German quarters that for tactical reasons their leaders would insist on keeping the door open for further demands. The moderate and reasonable people would not, he feared, care to stand up to the young radical elements. He did not, however, take this too tragically since the final result would in any case be a scheme of decentralisation and the grant of many of the Sudeten demands for self-administration, both in the districts and also in the provinces, where a new institution, the Curia, would be given the power of independent decision in many matters. Incidentally, this would provide the solution of the Slovak and Hlinka question.

5. The Sudeten German representatives might say confidentially that they recognised that much had been done but that they could not vote for the Government measures or accept them because they did not grant all their demands. For certain items, however, they might vote, for example, for the language law, which would require a two-thirds majority as it involved an alteration of the Constitution in order to secure its passage. Otherwise an attempt might have to be made to enlist Communist votes. I might interpolate here that I pointed out to the Sudeten German leader, Herr Frank, on

June 25 that at least the language law should afford his party the opportunity of co-operating for once with the Czechoslovak Government.

6. Dr. Benes said that on the Czechoslovak side the technical as well as the political preparation of the Government measures would be complicated and difficult and the preliminary discussions with the Coalition parties would not be easy. He could however guarantee that they would accept the draft bills, which would be introduced about the middle of July.

7. On the subject of the Volkstag, President Benes repeated to me his fear that it might vote for the separation of its nationality from the State. It was a Nazi method to maintain an appearance of legality. The German Nazis claimed to have come to power and effected their revolution in Germany by legal means and that everything in Austria, including their capture of it, had been effected quite legally. If as a result of instructions conveyed by Herr Himmler to Herr Frank the Sudeten German National Assembly voted for separation the Reich would maintain that the whole business was entirely legal and thus, so Dr. Benes implied, derive additional justification for intervention.

8. At the end of this part of our conversation Dr. Benes observed that the Sudeten German memorandum was entitled a 'Sketch for the reform, etc.' If it was a sketch it ought not to be regarded as a maximum and treated as an ultimatum and there should be some spirit of compromise. He feared, however, that the Germans would in practice demand everything and more than was in the power of the Czechoslovak Government to grant unless they could be made to feel that the influence which was being exercised in a friendly way on the Czechoslovak Government would also be applied to them.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 456

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*

*No. 1427 [C 6462/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 29, 1938*

Sir,

In the course of my conversation with the French Ambassador this afternoon, I told the Ambassador of the telegram that we had sent to your Excellency to-day concerning what we had in mind by way of the selection of a possible mediator in the event of a deadlock arising in the present negotiations with Czechoslovakia.

2. I told him that I thought it important to maintain the pressure at Prague, though I also hoped that, for various reasons, the atmosphere of Berlin was less difficult than it had been a week or two ago.

3. The Ambassador told me that he had seen reports of two interviews which M. François-Poncet had had in Berlin: one with Baron von Neurath, which had been encouraging, though Baron von Neurath did not exercise

great influence; and the other with Herr von Ribbentrop, which had been of the confused and bombastic kind which most of those who have had interviews with the German Foreign Minister have learned to expect.

I am, &c.

HALIFAX

No. 457

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 188 Telegraphic [C 6444/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 30, 1938, 9.00 p.m.

Your telegram No. 324,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 4.

1. As we do not know exactly what the Czechoslovak Government have offered the Sudeten representatives in the course of the negotiations, and as I do not want at this stage to get involved in discussion of technical details, representations in Berlin or advice to the Sudeten must needs be in the most general terms.

2. As shown in my telegram No. 186,<sup>2</sup> steps are being taken to give such advice to the Sudeten leaders.

3. As regards the German Government, do you consider that anything more should be said at this stage beyond what His Majesty's Ambassador has been instructed to say in my telegram No. 271<sup>3</sup> to Berlin? Indeed in the light of M. Benes's remarks reported in your telegram No. 324, paragraph 3, is it safe, as suggested in that telegram, for His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin to proceed in speaking to the German Government on the assumption that the Czechoslovak Government's proposal to introduce into Parliament next month such concessions as they may have accepted does not indicate a desire on their part to adopt a take it or leave it attitude?

4. In view of the conflicting statements made to you by M. Hodza and Dr. Benes, I hope you will be able to find out what the intentions of the Czechoslovak Government really are as regards legislation when Parliament meets.

5. Failing an agreed settlement in the immediate future, is it, as would appear from your conversation with Dr. Benes, their intention to terminate negotiations and to embody the maximum concessions they are prepared to make in a law to be presented to Parliament in the middle of next month? Or do they, as Dr. Hodza seemed to contemplate in the conversation reported in your telegram No. 319,<sup>4</sup> intend 'at the worst' to introduce into Parliament a partial settlement embodying points on which agreement has been reached, which, if inadequate, would be followed by further negotiations on the bigger issues in the early autumn?

6. It seems hardly possible to expect that a final settlement which will give satisfaction to the Sudetens can be reached by the middle of next month. If therefore a bill is to be laid before Parliament when it meets, it is likely to represent only a partial solution. I am in favour of embodying as soon as

<sup>1</sup> No. 449.

<sup>2</sup> No. 454.

<sup>3</sup> No. 453.

<sup>4</sup> No. 446.

possible in legislation agreement on such matters as can be now settled, but only on the understanding that if these matters do not satisfy the Sudeten Party's demands on other and probably fundamental questions, this legislation should be recognised on both sides as incomplete and provisional, and should not be presented as the maximum beyond which the Czechoslovak Government cannot go.

7. I would find it very difficult at this stage to urge the need for concessions on the Sudeten, either direct or through the German Government, if the Czechoslovak Government had for their part already decided to make no further advance but to present the Sudeten with a final scheme which they would be required to take or leave.

Repeated to Berlin No. 275 and Paris.

#### No. 458

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 2)*

*No. 303 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6600/1941/18]*

BERLIN, June 30, 1938

1. Mr. Newton's telegram No. 316,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 4.<sup>2</sup>

2. It is understandable that M. Hodza should be apprehensive lest public statements in England should encourage the Sudeten party. Nevertheless I have an uneasy feeling that Dr. Benes is still not resigned to accepting the comprehensive settlement which will alone afford even the slightest prospect of permanence. It is doubtful even if his extremist followers, believing as they do that it was the Czech military measures on May 21 which saved the situation and that they enjoy into the bargain the support of England and France, will ever allow him to do so without some form of public warning on our part.

3. It seems to me, in view of possibility of a deadlock, that the British public is also entitled to a clear statement of the facts. The example of Austria and the fulminations of the German press, radio and public speakers against Czechoslovakia convinced the world that Germany in fact contemplated a *coup* against that country during the week-end of May 21 and had effectively concentrated troops for that purpose. It is of course possible, even probable, that the Nazi party did envisage a *coup* and might have taken action to execute it if His Majesty's Government had not shown their hand so firmly and so promptly. Yet this is pure supposition for which there is no evidence whereas the alleged military concentration was definitely proved to be a myth.<sup>3</sup>

4. Moreover all the rumours, most of them inaccurate and exaggerated, which have since gained credence in regard to that week-end have obscured in British eyes the essential and fundamental issue, namely that the Sudeten who, even if only those actually living in solid blocks on the frontier are

<sup>1</sup> No. 444.

<sup>2</sup> This reference is apparently an error for 'paragraph 5'.

<sup>3</sup> On this question the Foreign Office continued to take a different view from that expressed by Sir N. Henderson.



counted, are nearly as numerous as the population of Norway and considerably more so than several of the smaller European States, are claiming in virtue of the right of self-determination a comprehensive measure of autonomy. So long as this demand remains unsatisfied the Sudeten have a strong moral case resting on a principle which His Majesty's Government cannot afford to disregard and which the Czechs themselves would be well advised in their own future interests to uphold. It is not only the basis of their own existence but likely to be also that of British policy in the event of Germany seeking expansion in Europe at a later date.

5. Another misleading factor in the situation is the standpoint that it is Germany which is solely responsible for egging the Sudeten on. Germany with her seventy odd millions is there on the frontier and is of course the decisive power at the back, but it is the Sudeten themselves who are agitating for self-administration and who—if needs be—will strike the first blow for what they regard as their own freedom.

6. Finally there is the consideration that the supporters of the League have always insisted that the necessary revision of the treaties should be effected by peaceful means (Article 19 of the Covenant). The Nazis have maintained that this is a practical impossibility. It is thus up to the League Powers to prove on this occasion that if no peaceful settlement is reached it is not their fault.

7. It is on these grounds that His Majesty's Government are entitled to expect Czechoslovak Government to make a comprehensive and generous offer and I cannot but feel that it would be useful if some statement clarifying the position were made in England on the subject. It could, if necessary, be accompanied by a private intimation to Henlein that if the Czechoslovak Government do make such an offer and he rejects it, he will forfeit such sympathy as he now enjoys.

8. Failing a public statement on the above lines I would submit that the time has come to let Dr. Benes know privately that, in the event of a deadlock calculated to endanger the maintenance of world peace, our only course would be to intervene with a proposal for a plebiscite with the object of detaching such portions of the Sudeten areas which lie actually on the German frontiers, and which show a majority in favour of incorporation in the Reich.

Repeated to Prague.

#### No. 459

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 2)*

*No. 290 Telegraphic [C 6606/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 1, 1938

Prague telegram No. 329.<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch as views attributed to French Ambassador here appeared to me

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 29 Mr. Newton reported he had learned from his French colleague that the French Ambassador in Berlin had expressed the opinions referred to in the text.

inaccurate I arranged to call on him this morning and was with him when your telegram No. 274<sup>2</sup> was brought me.

M. François-Poncet assured me that he had never on any occasion expressed the view that German Government had mistaken our attitude on May 21 or might interpret our intervention at Prague as sign of weakness or as indication that prospects for another *coup* are more favourable.

Generally speaking his views were summed up as follows: Germany is bent on disruption of a Czechoslovakia which *allied to Russia* constitutes a perpetual menace to Germany. Possibility of a *coup* was seriously contemplated in May but was abandoned as result of British action and German military unpreparedness.

Herr Hitler was bitterly humiliated by attitude of world press after May crisis and is consequently planning a counter-stroke. Opportunity for this might occur in August when crops are harvested and provided fortifications on French frontier on which, as my Military Attaché confirms to me, much work is now being executed have been completed by then. Opportunity for *coup* might also occur if France and Great Britain became involved in complications in Europe or elsewhere. Nevertheless *subject to the unforeseen*, the Ambassador believes today that the probability is that there will be a respite till next spring or later. He is so little anxious at the moment that he is leaving Berlin in a few days to do a cure at Gastein. But he proposed to be here in August.

I am in general agreement with the above views except in so far as if there is to be a crisis I anticipate it for this month rather than August, that I fear an incident in Czechoslovakia rather than outside complications and that I believe the German Government to wish for a peaceful solution this year for reasons which I have already expressed in telegrams, despatches and letters. Germany today in my opinion is not ready militarily to take a risk which might involve war on the largest scale. Once she is militarily prepared she will take that risk if we cannot before then achieve a solution at Prague which affords the possibility of permanence. I have however underlined certain words in these paragraphs in view of grave danger—when one is dealing with such a shrewd personality as Herr Hitler—of being dogmatic.

I have further underlined words 'allied to Russia' since this in Poncet's opinion and in my own is the crux of the situation. The Ambassador made this clear to M. Bonnet and even as he said to M. Léger when he was in Paris a fortnight ago. One outcome of the present negotiations and of Sudeten autonomy according to the Ambassador must be neutralization of Czechoslovakia. It is only on that basis that Germany will ever renounce her intention of disrupting that country. On that basis she *may* admit permanence of Czechoslovakia but never otherwise. He is as convinced as I am that the key to the situation lies in Prague and depends on the far-reaching nature of concessions to the Sudeten.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram asked Sir N. Henderson for observations on the views attributed to the French Ambassador.

No. 460

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 2)*

*No. 291 Telegraphic [C 6633/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 1, 1938

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

As I understand that Minister for Foreign Affairs proposes to leave next week for the country and not be at his office during the rest of the month I have arranged to see him on Monday afternoon the 4th instant.

If there is anything which you particularly wish to say to him beyond general line already indicated could you let me know.

No. 461

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 2)*

*No. 439 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6588/1941/18]*

PARIS, July 1, 1938

Your telegram No. 158 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I explained the position this afternoon to the Minister for Foreign Affairs who entirely agrees with your views.

M. Bonnet agrees that we should continue every effort to bring the present negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten to a successful conclusion, and that no inkling of our intention to have a British mediator in reserve should reach the Czechs or the Germans.

In accordance with the wish expressed in your telegram No. 155 Saving<sup>2</sup> of June 27, M. Bonnet has instructed the French Minister to seek immediate interviews with Dr. Hodza and with Dr. Benes and to speak to them in the same sense as Mr. Newton.

Repeated Saving to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 452.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 448, note 2.

No. 462

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 2)*

*No. 440 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6589/1941/18]*

PARIS, July 1, 1938

Your telegram No. 160 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

His Majesty's Minister spoke on this subject this morning to the Political Director, and I urged M. Bonnet this afternoon to give his views on our proposals at an early date.

His Excellency promised to do this within the next few days.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 429, note 2.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)**No. 278 Telegraphic [C 6633/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 2, 1938, 6.0 p.m.*Your telegram No. 291.<sup>1</sup>

While, as you will have seen from my telegram No. 275,<sup>2</sup> I am not quite clear about the intentions of the Czechoslovak Government (see paragraph 4 of my telegram No. 271),<sup>3</sup> I think that you should take the opportunity of your interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs to speak on the lines of paragraph 3 of my telegram No. 271.

Moreover, I observe from your telegrams No. 301 (Saving)<sup>4</sup> and No. 304 (Saving)<sup>4</sup> that the German press is again becoming impatient and seems to have departed from the attitude of comparative moderation to which you referred in your telegram No. 283.<sup>5</sup> I should, therefore, be glad if you would again urge upon Herr von Ribbentrop the great importance of restraint and moderation in the German press and wireless.

You should not make any mention to Herr von Ribbentrop of the proposal to appoint a mediator, referred to in my telegram No. 158 (Saving)<sup>6</sup> to Paris.

Please see also my immediately following telegram.<sup>7</sup>

Repeated to Prague and to Paris Saving.

<sup>1</sup> No. 460.    <sup>2</sup> No. 457.    <sup>3</sup> No. 453.    <sup>4</sup> Not printed.    <sup>5</sup> No. 437.    <sup>6</sup> No. 452.

<sup>7</sup> Not printed. This telegram dealt with a forthcoming meeting at Évian-les-Bains on the question of refugees from Germany and Austria.

## No. 464

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 3)**No. 294 Telegraphic [C 6607/1941/18]*BERLIN, *July 2, 1938*

I took the opportunity of visit on another matter of State Secretary today to ask him what news German Government had of negotiations at Prague. He told me that their information was very meagre. He had seen the proposals in Sudeten memorandum but the German Government like His Majesty's Government did not wish, he said, to get involved in detail and except on general moderating lines they were giving no advice to Sudeten Germans who were moreover not seeking any. Even the German Minister at Prague who had recently been at Berlin had been unable to give any indication as to progress of negotiations.

State Secretary complained nevertheless of delay in producing anything concrete. According to him the juridical commission was still studying the legal aspect of proposals in Sudeten German memorandum i.e. how far they were compatible with constitution of the State, a controversial study which might go on indefinitely and lead nowhere. The Sudeten Germans had not yet so far as he knew even been shown Nationality Statute nor had they been told how far or which of their own proposals were acceptable.

I preached my habitual counsel of patience and restraint, necessity for moderation in German press and radio, and insisted once more on sincerity of M. Benes and delicacy and difficulty both of his negotiations and of our own. State Secretary replied that German Government was prepared to be patient but the danger was that Sudeten Germans would not. He insisted that German Government had no real authority over Sudeten German leaders and even if they had latter had little over their own followers. He did not anticipate that Czech Parliament would meet before end of July.

As regards M. Benes State Secretary retorted that he had known him over a period of years at Geneva and had had at least 100 meetings with him. He was the quickest and ablest man that he knew in words and formulae but he was a mere tactician and no statesman but he was also a gambler without a real sense of responsibility.

I quote above as representing views held here by more moderate German officials.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 465

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 3)*

*No. 333 Telegraphic [C 6640/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 2, 1938

Your telegram No. 188.<sup>1</sup>

In reply to paragraphs 3 and 7, what I had in mind was some general representation to the effect that if the two parties are to reach a point where they can agree there must be some advance from starting point of Sudeten German party as well as from that of the Government.

So far as we gather from authoritative sources there has been very considerable advance from the original position of the Government, first of all by their preparation of the original Nationalities status quo ante [*sic*<sup>2</sup>] draft (thought in many quarters at the time according to its President and M. Benes to be . . .<sup>3</sup>) and secondly by further substantial concessions and developments in amplification of original draft. Hitherto there appear to have been no concessions from demands of Sudeten German party. As Dr. Hodza said to me today the Czechs have made considerable evolution. The Sudeten German (?party)<sup>3</sup> ought to make a certain evolution too. I had . . .<sup>3</sup> therefore that something could be said on the lines of paragraph 7 of my telegram No. 316<sup>4</sup> and the German Government given to understand that the maintenance of a (?completely)<sup>3</sup> uncompromising attitude by Sudeten German party would put them in the wrong with public opinion in England and elsewhere (see also paragraph 8 of my telegram No. 258 Saving).<sup>5</sup>

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 457.

<sup>2</sup> These words appear to be an error in transmission for 'Statute'.

<sup>3</sup> The text here is uncertain.

<sup>4</sup> No. 444.

<sup>5</sup> No. 455.



No. 466

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 4)*

*No. 446 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6624/1941/18]*

PARIS, July 2, 1938

My telegram No. 440 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I brought this matter up once more this afternoon in conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and quoted, as pertinent to the question, the opinion of the French and British Ambassadors in Berlin reported in Sir Neville Henderson's telegram No. 290,<sup>2</sup> to the effect that Germany is bent on the disruption of a Czechoslovakia which, *allied to Russia*, constitutes a perpetual menace to Germany.

I added that I agreed entirely with this view. When I was in Berlin the fact that Czechoslovakia was allied to the Soviets seemed to fill the Nazis with fury which I believed to be genuine.

M. Bonnet repeated his promise to reply to Your Lordship's proposals at an early date. He again laid stress on the necessity for the utmost secrecy being observed in this matter for the present, and I entirely agreed.

<sup>1</sup> No. 462.

<sup>2</sup> No. 459.

No. 467

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 4)*

*No. 335 Telegraphic [C 6666/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 3, 1938

Paragraph 6 of your telegram No. 188<sup>1</sup> raises questions of considerable difficulty. For some time now under strongest pressure from us Czechoslovak Government have indicated that they have gone further and further towards meeting Sudeten German demands while making it clear from the outset that there were certain limits. Up to these limits they would go and (which is one of the Sudeten demands) would give legislative effect to the result. If Czechs are to go to what they, for the time being at any rate, feel to be the limit of what they can do, it would be very difficult for them to give legislative effect thereto and in doing so admit legislation was incomplete and provisional, an admission which could only mean that they had in fact not yet gone to their limit.

2. But if they do not enact all they are prepared to do an opportunity will have been missed and grounds given for the accusation either that they are being deliberately obstructive or that they are still merely tinkering with the question. Moreover, for His Majesty's Government to advise Czechoslovak Government to delay until an agreement can be reached, when after several weeks of negotiations no agreement is in sight, would be a reversal or at any rate a very important qualification of advice hitherto given to go both as far and as fast as possible and to delay no longer in showing results.

<sup>1</sup> No. 457.

3. As I believe this advice has been taken to heart I doubt whether Czechoslovak Government would in any case now be willing to postpone their programme of reform. During my audience on June 28 I read to the [*sic*] President Benes, to whom I had already stressed the importance of reaching an *agreed* settlement if this were humanly possible, the last paragraph of Sir N. Henderson's telegram No. 155<sup>2</sup> down to words 'serious situation here' and omitting reference to Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin. Dr. Benes said that if reference to a 'take it or leave it' decision meant that Nationalities Statute was to be indefinitely postponed, he thought that such a postponement would be disastrous. Apart from the Sudeten question he regards the statute as the answer to Slovak autonomists (see paragraph 4 of my Saving telegram No. 258).<sup>3</sup> Dr. Hodza also, as you are aware from last paragraph of my saving telegram No. 226<sup>4</sup> of June 18, has previously taken the line that while he would do his utmost to reach agreement, he realized that no time must now be lost and intended in any case to introduce Government reforms into Parliament about the middle of the month. Among other reasons for doing so may be his hope that if only the Sudeten Germans can be made to realize by actual experience how substantial and genuine proposed concessions are, the moderates will be accordingly strengthened and the whole atmosphere improved.

4. A possibility which cannot be excluded is that the Sudeten Germans may take the line that they will not run the risk of being fobbed off by minor concessions and may on that ground refuse to accept any legislation at all unless and until the major issue can be settled to their satisfaction.

5. During my conversation with President of the Council yesterday my impression was that he still hoped to achieve a comprehensive settlement since he claimed that far reaching proposals adumbrated in my telegram No. 334<sup>5</sup> would fulfil the bulk of Sudeten demands in substance if not in form, in particular he thought he would be conceding all claims stated by Herr Henlein in London although he had never seen any precise text. I took opportunity, however, to indicate some of difficulties mentioned above and to ask, for my own information, how he regarded them. As regards achievement of agreement on minor though important points, e.g. on language law, Dr. Hodza anticipated no difficulty; on the major issue he was vague, saying that his mind was open as to best way of handling it. In any

<sup>2</sup> This number is incorrect. The reference is evidently to No. 445.

<sup>3</sup> No. 455.

<sup>4</sup> No. 426.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of July 2, Mr. Newton reported a conversation with Dr. Hodza, who was proposing to meet with two important concessions the substance of Sudeten objections that administrative decentralization based on provincial, not racial, groups would increase the influence of Czech majorities in the Provinces by giving them greater independence from the Centre. First, while he continued opposed to National Curiae in the Central Parliament, he contemplated entrusting those in the Provincial Assemblies with certain independent powers, which would be 'quite real'. Second, he proposed that the Curia should have its own administrative organs, with a definite territory, in addition to the administrative system for which the Curiae acting together in the provincial assemblies would be responsible.

case he professed confidence in his ability to deal with Nationality Statute in such a manner as to avoid a crisis and danger of getting into a dead end.

6. My German colleague expressed to me last night the view that enactment of Nationality Statute before an agreement was in sight with Sudeten German party would create a very bad impression. Its provisions and above all its general tone were, he believed, still very unsatisfactory; it would be taken as the last word of the Czechoslovak Government and it would appear to be an attempt to throw dust in the eyes of British and French Governments and to hoodwink public opinion generally, compare sub-paragraph 4 of third paragraph of Berlin telegram No. 272 Saving.<sup>6</sup> I rejoined that by the middle of July negotiations would already have been proceeding for some time and that postponement of Nationality Statute *sine die* might surely create a much worse impression, and if so you envisaged the danger of an outburst or incidents arising from impatience and the feeling that nothing would ever be done after all. From the point of view of results would it not be better for Sudeten Germans to give the offer a trial and even if they were not satisfied be content to proceed step by step? Dr. Eisenlohr admitted that he had previously held such views himself but was now convinced that it would be a serious blunder to force on Germans a Nationality Statute to which they had not agreed.

7. It seems to me difficult at the moment to see a clear way through the difficulties and barriers to which I have alluded in this telegram. I feel some doubt therefore whether we should do more than draw attention to them as I began to do in my conversation with the President of the Council yesterday. In any case it seems to me that if the Czechoslovak Government agrees to postponement of any substantial part of their Nationality Statute they should make it clear that they are doing so to meet the desire of Sudeten German party itself. Meanwhile possibility of its enactment may be a means of influencing the Sudeten Germans to be more reasonable in their task.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>6</sup> No. 378.

No. 468

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 5)*

*No. 337 Telegraphic [C 6664/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 4, 1938

Your telegram No. 158 Saving<sup>1</sup> to Paris.

In third paragraph of my telegram No. 304,<sup>2</sup> I uttered a warning that we should not take for granted Czech acceptance of a mediator though I thought they might welcome proposal among other reasons because it would tend to commit His Majesty's Government to further interest in their fate.

I fear reservation contained in penultimate paragraph of your telegram under reference that mediator, although British and appointed by British

<sup>1</sup> No. 452.

<sup>2</sup> No. 431.

Government, would not commit His Majesty's Government to support of his views would make the proposal less attractive to Czechoslovak Government. You will have seen too from third paragraph of my telegram No. 324<sup>3</sup> that Dr. Benes still continues to avoid asking for our advice. To the above extent prospects of acceptance of mediation by Czechoslovak Government are diminished. If accepted they might at any rate make reservations regarding the integrity of State, especially if they felt that in their negotiations and their Nationalities Statute they were in fact going to the limit of what they thought safe.

Repeated to Paris and to Berlin, Saving.

<sup>3</sup> No. 449.

### No. 469

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 5)*  
*No. 295 Telegraphic [C 6665/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 4, 1938

My telegram No. 291.<sup>1</sup>

Minister for Foreign Affairs invited me down to his country seat yesterday afternoon on ground that he would probably have to go to Munich and might not be able to [?see] me today. I took the opportunity accordingly to speak to him in the sense of the instructions in your telegrams Nos. 271<sup>2</sup> and 278.<sup>3</sup>

As regards German press he took the line that it was showing astonishing moderation in view of provocation of Czech press and language used at Sokol meetings etc. see my telegram No. 306 Saving.<sup>4</sup> I reminded him that Germany was a big Power and could therefore afford to be more restrained, that German Government must have patience and confidence in the sincerity of our efforts at Prague and that, since both of us desired peaceful solution, they must give proof of their desire to cooperate with us.

Within reasonable limits I hope that this advice will be followed but it is not to be expected that German press will refrain from insisting on dilatoriness of Czech methods. From violent language, menace and incitement the German press is still comparatively free.

I asked Herr von Ribbentrop whether the German Government really desired and believed that a peaceable arrangement was possible. After a moment's consideration he said he thought that it was but that all depended on Prague. He referred to Germany's inevitable interest in the cause of blood relations and asserted that he would never recommend to the Chancellor that settlement should be forced on Sudetens by Germany. Such a solution would, he said, never be [?a] permanent one and would merely lead to more trouble in the future. Settlement, in his opinion, must be an agreed one and Germany was not giving any detailed advice to Henlein on the subject. The

<sup>1</sup> No. 460.

<sup>3</sup> No. 463.

<sup>2</sup> No. 453.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed.

latter was a moderate man and if he could not be satisfied it would be M. Benes's fault.

In reply to my assurances in respect of M. Benes' good intentions Minister for Foreign Affairs' attitude was that he hoped that I was right but that he feared the outcome would prove me wrong. I mentioned confidentially information in Prague telegram No. 330<sup>5</sup> as indicating real progress. While grudgingly admitting that this might be so, Herr von Ribbentrop observed that it was not much to show for two months' hard work. I reasoned with him on this subject but the fact that Herr von Ribbentrop proposes to spend the rest of the month down in the country, though easy of access there, indicates that he does not anticipate any quick progress or immediately serious developments.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of July 1, Mr. Newton reported that the President of the Council had informed him that he had handed the Government's proposals for a reform of the Language Law, as well as certain parts of the Nationality Statute, to the Sudeten representatives, Herren Kundt and Rosche, the previous day. The parts concerning administrative autonomy would be presented to them the next week.

#### No. 470

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 5)*

*No. 338 Telegraphic [C 6780/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 4, 1938

After dinner with me on July 2 my German colleague made following remarks in addition to those reported in paragraph 6 of my telegram No. 335.<sup>1</sup>

Relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia were, he said, governed by two main factors, foreign policy and Sudeten German question. The former could wait, the latter which rested entirely within the power of Czechoslovak Government could not. In fact he doubted whether present comparative lull would last more than three weeks. Although he was *inter alia* [*sic*] pessimistic, he had just sent an optimistic report to Berlin and he professed to be comforted by such account as I could give him of situation as I saw it. According to his information Czechs were saying that if present situation could only be tided over for the next two years by the minimum of concessions possible Great Britain would have completed her rearmament (? and) there would be no need for fundamental changes. I told him I had no confirmation of such views being held in responsible quarters. He said more than once that it would be very helpful if General Faucher and French Military Mission could be influenced to impress upon General Staff the importance of an early and fundamental settlement.

What Sudeten Germans wanted was 'Gleichberechtigung' and provided that they obtained the substance they would not mind about the form. I told him I had been informed by Dr. Hodza that very day that he believed

<sup>1</sup> No. 467.



Czechoslovak Government would be able to grant 70 per cent. to 80 per cent. of substance of Sudeten German demands but not in the form in which they had been cast. I pointed out that there must also be some reciprocal compromise on Sudeten side and urged him to use his influence in that sense. Dr. Eisenlohr was honest enough to intimate once more that no settlement reached at present was to be final. A settlement embodying main substance of Sudeten claims would, however, mark a definite stage and represent solution at any rate for time being.

Dr. Eisenlohr expressed opinion that Sudetens were developing an increased sense of responsibility and mentioned that they had recently sent to Vienna for a constitutional lawyer who would assist them in their discussions.

Repeated to Berlin Saving. Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

No. 471

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 6)*

*No. 280 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6838/1946/18]*

PRAGUE, July 4, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 294,<sup>1</sup> third paragraph.

When it suits them German spokesmen talk of splendid and meritorious discipline of Sudeten German population which is indeed confirmed by many independent sources. Herr Frank made this claim the other day and I told him that in my opinion his case was thereby greatly strengthened. On other occasions however it is suggested, as by German State Secretary, that Sudeten Germans are an undisciplined mob out of their leaders' control. Either may be credible but not both.

Surely too the German Government cannot admit that they would themselves be so irresponsible as to leave to the unpredictable reactions of an undisciplined mob the decision whether it would 'act like lightning' and risk in the process the possibilities of a European war? It might of course be argued that Sudeten Germans used to be disciplined but had been driven to desperation by Czechs. Such an argument now would be equally insincere since having borne their fate for so long Sudeten Germans should obviously be able to continue to bear it at a time when they have just obtained the relief of an amnesty and of communal elections and can look forward to further relief which is at least likely to be substantial and might even meet the bulk of their demands.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 464.

MEMORANDUM FROM VISCOUNT HALIFAX TO M. BONNET<sup>1</sup>

[C 6914/1941/18]

Lord Halifax much appreciates M. Bonnet's courtesy in sending him through Sir E. Phipps a copy of the memorandum<sup>2</sup> which he gave to M. Osusky on June 9th for transmission to Dr. Benes. This memorandum was of particular interest to Lord Halifax, since it was the outcome of the request which he had made to M. Bonnet through Sir E. Phipps on June 1st. On that occasion Sir E. Phipps, on instructions, expressed to M. Bonnet the hope that the French Government would realise not less urgently than His Majesty's Government the importance of putting the greatest possible pressure, without delay, upon Dr. Benes, and that M. Bonnet would be able to instruct the French Minister in Prague to collaborate with his British colleague in informing Dr. Benes of the importance of accepting the propositions outlined by Herr Henlein in London as a basis of discussion. Furthermore, in view of the special relations between France and Czechoslovakia, Sir E. Phipps expressed the hope that the French Government would, as suggested by M. Bonnet himself at an earlier date, warn Dr. Benes that if through any fault of his the present opportunity to reach a settlement was missed, the French Government would be driven to reconsider their position *vis-à-vis* Czechoslovakia.

2. Lord Halifax regrets to observe that this memorandum does not contain any specific warning that France would have to reconsider her treaty position if the Czechoslovak Government were unreasonable on the Sudeten question. It merely states that any delay or shortcomings on the part of the Czechoslovak Government would carry with them the risk of serious consequences by strengthening the hands of those elements which, in the different countries concerned, were in favour of a policy of reserve and abstention.

3. Lord Halifax still hopes that M. Bonnet may see his way on a suitable occasion to give the suggested warning to Dr. Benes. While naturally not wishing to express any opinion as to the policy of the French Government in the matter of their treaty obligations towards Czechoslovakia, he feels that it is of vital importance at the present juncture that the Czechoslovak Government, and Dr. Benes in particular, should be under no misapprehension as to the difficulties with which the French Government could hardly fail to be faced in carrying out those obligations if this had to be done in circumstances where there were good grounds for arguing that France was being involved in a war because Czechoslovakia had failed to make, or had delayed to make until too late, her full contribution to the cause of peace.

4. Lord Halifax would also like to call attention to the general line of argument used in M. Bonnet's memorandum, since he feels that it may give the impression that the French Government are not altogether animated

<sup>1</sup> This memorandum was given to the French Ambassador by Lord Halifax on July 7, in the course of an interview dealing entirely with other matters. Lord Halifax does not appear to have made any supplementary observations on this memorandum. <sup>2</sup> See No. 447.

by the same considerations as are His Majesty's Government in regard to the negotiations now proceeding between the Czech Government and the Sudeten leaders. The memorandum gives but little indication that the French Government share the anxiety felt by H.M. Government regarding the slowness of the progress and the inadequacy of the concessions hitherto made by the Czechoslovak Government. On the contrary, it is strongly suggested in the memorandum that it is chiefly because the French Government attach the utmost importance to the state of British public opinion that they call the attention of the Czechoslovak Government to the risk of discouraging or disappointing the hopes on which joint Franco-British action in favour of Czechoslovakia is based. It is not quite clear what is meant by the expression 'joint Franco-British action in favour of Czechoslovakia'. It is to be hoped that M. Benes will not read into this expression more than is warranted by the decision reached at the Anglo-French meeting of Ministers on April 28th-29th, when it was agreed that the British and French Governments would make representations to the Czech Government to secure the maximum concessions from Dr. Benes, while His Majesty's Government alone would make certain representations to the German Government in the interests of a peaceful solution.

5. If Lord Halifax has ventured to offer these observations on M. Benes' [sic] memorandum, it is because he shares to the full M. Bonnet's wish to see the British and French Governments collaborate in the handling of the Czech problem, and in particular in the advice which they give to the Czech Government. For this purpose it is important that the views expressed and the policy recommended should be presented as emanating directly and with equal force from both Governments. Only so can the influence of each Government produce its full effect on the Czechoslovak Government.

#### No. 473

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 10)*  
*No. 340 Telegraphic [C 6893/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 9, 1938

Czechoslovak Minister at London called on me on July 8 and told me Parliamentary Committee concerned expected to have completed its examination of Government nationality proposals by July 12.

I pointed out that Sudeten German representatives would apparently have very little time to negotiate about them if they were to be introduced into Parliament that week. I added that during my last audience I had emphasized to the President the importance of reaching an agreed solution, and I begged Dr. Masaryk, who was going on to see the President, to impress on him that it would be a great mistake to give the Sudeten German party any plausible ground for complaining that they had not adequate opportunity of negotiating about the Government's proposals before they were introduced into Parliament.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 10)*  
*No. 341 Telegraphic [C 6920/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 9, 1938

I have obtained, July 9, following account of present state of Nationalities question from Dr. Schiessl, the official specially concerned on staff of the President.

2. The government proposals consist of:—

- (1) A Language Law.
- (2) A Nationality Statute and
- (3) A scheme of re-organisation of administration.

Their proposals are being considered by a Parliamentary Committee of six representing Coalition Parties and as regards the first two at any rate the Committee should have finished its work by next Tuesday<sup>1</sup> and consequential drafting of alterations be made on the following day. Dr. Schiessl understood Sudeten German representatives had already received from Dr. Hodza original drafts of Language Law and of Nationality Statute. The reference in Sudeten German communiqué of July 7 to receipt of only a part of Nationality Statute, might, in Dr. Schiessl's opinion, be based on a misunderstanding. In any case he assumed drafts, when revised, would be communicated without delay to Sudeten Germans' negotiators. He further understood that Government would then be ready to submit these two laws to Parliament at once, in agreement with Sudeten German Party, or to delay doing so if Party so desired, and a prospect of agreement remained. The Nationality Statute would cover such matters as definition of Nationalities, protection against de-nationalisation, of [*sic*] a *de facto* Court of Justice for determining Nationalities claims, the proportionality of officials, the proportionality in budget and in allocation of public orders.

3. The third question, administrative re-organisation was more difficult and delicate. The Sudeten German party realizing perhaps that some of the demands in their memoranda were impracticable had now submitted unofficially and very confidentially further proposals under which administrative reform and self administration would be based on a division of the country into administrative areas called *Gaue* (for particulars see my telegram No. 291 Saving).<sup>2</sup> Dr. Schiessl was going to try to ascertain if these proposals were serious and if they were he evidently felt that this new development was hopeful, as it would mean scrapping of existing Government's proposals based on a provincial re-organisation, and adoption of new Sudeten

<sup>1</sup> July 12.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram gave further details of the proposals from a Sudeten memorandum which Mr. Newton had obtained confidentially from a neutral source. These views 'are understood to have been approved by Herr Henlein and most of the party leaders, who however hesitate officially to withdraw any of their demands'. In Mr. Newton's opinion these proposals represented a promising departure from former demands.

German proposals would necessarily take some time, perhaps three or four weeks.

4. It seemed increasingly probable that Parliament would meet about July 21 but no definite date had been fixed and meeting might have to be further postponed. In order to hurry matters up President had let it be known that Parliament would be expected to have completed its task by August 15 at latest, but of course this might not be possible in practice. President and Government were resolved that Parliament must remain in session until Nationalities legislation had been passed. At the same time the President realized the great importance of reaching agreement beforehand if possible with Sudeten German party which would therefore have full opportunity to consider and negotiate over the proposals of the Government.

5. I drew Dr. Schiessl's attention to Sudeten German communiqué of July 4<sup>3</sup> from which it might appear that the Government had pledged itself to refrain from legislation unless agreed to by Sudeten German party. Dr. Schiessl explained that statement of President of the Council mentioned in communiqué of July 4 means that nothing would be done without prior consultation and agreement if possible with Sudeten German party. If agreement however proved impossible the Government would feel reluctantly obliged to go ahead with their own solution.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>3</sup> This communiqué stated that note was taken of the declaration of the President of the Council that the nationality question would not be formally dealt with, particularly in Parliament, without agreement with the Sudeten German party.

#### No. 475

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 11)*

*No. 292 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6957/1941/18]*

Paris telegram No. 198.<sup>1</sup>

PRAGUE, July 9, 1936

French Minister saw both President of the Republic and President of the Council July 1 but owing to Sokols celebrations I have not been able to obtain a proper account of what passed until today.

My French colleague informs me that before July 1 he had of his own initiative had interviews with President Benes, Dr. Hodza and also Dr. Krofta in the course of which he had drawn their attention strongly to unsatisfactory utterances not only of the press but also of certain Government officials. He had declined to specify their names but meant in particular the press section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had pointed out that whatever justification there might be for arguments used, the manner and tone in which they were presented were often ill-judged, and even aggressive. To the President in particular he had observed the fact of such utterances being made by Government officials could easily be misused in support of

<sup>1</sup> No. 450.



accusations made against Dr. Benes personally. He had gone on to say that these utterances were bound to have a bad effect on public opinion in France and England and thereby react on attitude of French and British Governments and make it more difficult for them to support Czechoslovakia. My French colleague had furthermore repeated his usual exhortation to (?him)<sup>1</sup>. M. Bonnet had been very pleased with the line he had taken and had instructed him to say it all over again but this time as coming from French Minister for Foreign Affairs. This M. de Lacroix had accordingly done during his interviews on July 1.

Repeated to Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

#### No. 476

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 11)*

*No. 294 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6956/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 10, 1938

I had short conversation July 7 with M. Monnet, Minister of Agriculture in the Blum Cabinet. M. Monnet at once brought up question of neutralising Czechoslovakia saying that he had been asked by French Minister for Foreign Affairs to make enquires as to feeling in Prague. I replied that it was not a question which I personally was discussing with Czechoslovak Government and that I understood French Minister for Foreign Affairs was particularly anxious that it should be kept as confidential as possible. M. Monnet said he would have no difficulty in referring to it as it was being freely discussed in French press. He seemed to expect Czechoslovak Government would have little sympathy with the idea even if they were to be guaranteed by France, Germany and British Government. I warned M. Monnet that there was no likelihood of a guarantee by British Government who at most might be willing to act as witnesses of such an arrangement. As regards its merits I pointed out that externally Czechoslovakia was in a weak position being now surrounded on three sides by the Reich and that internally she consisted of a variety of nationalities who would hardly be able to agree on any foreign policy other than a negative one.

2. M. Monnet also shewed some interest in question of economic assistance for Czechoslovakia and smilingly assented when I suggested that Czechoslovakia had more reason to be dissatisfied with state of her trade with France than with Great Britain.

3. As regards Czechoslovak neutrality I would here add that Finnish Chargé d'Affaires in Prague also seems to be well-informed of developments. He told a member of my staff that he had learned from a good French source (not however French Legation) that His Majesty's Government had recently submitted to French Government a plan whereby Czechoslovakia would be neutralised and her neutrality guaranteed by France, Germany and Russia but not by Great Britain.

Repeated Berlin and Paris.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 14)*  
*No. 300 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7015/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 12, 1938

My telegram No. 294 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I have ascertained from my French colleague that in conversation both with President Benes and with Dr. Hodza, M. Monnet brought up question of neutralizing Czechoslovakia by referring to what had appeared in the press on the subject. Without showing much liking for the idea Dr. Benes had said that it could be examined if seriously raised by France and Great Britain but that of course it would involve a number of questions which would require careful consideration. According to my French colleague's recollection the only such question specifically mentioned and one which would hardly appear to be of primary importance was whether Czechoslovakia would be entitled to deliver munitions to France if the latter were attacked by Germany. Dr. Hodza on the other hand summarily rejected the idea as being inconsistent with the rôle which Czechoslovakia had to fill in Europe.

2. My French colleague has not himself as yet been consulted on this question by his Government. I accordingly told him for his strictly personal and secret information that such an idea was under consideration, feeling that in the circumstances I should otherwise be lacking in a frankness which could hardly do any harm in view of information already possessed by my Finnish colleague. I also explained very briefly some of the reasons.

Repeated Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 476.

## No. 478

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 14)*  
*No. 301 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7013/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 12, 1938

Warsaw telegram 53 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Without any mention of last paragraph of above telegram I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs in the course of a general conversation on July 11 what was the present attitude of Polish Government towards Czechoslovakia. Dr. Krofta replied that from more than one good source he understood Colonel Beck's present policy to be as follows.

2. The break up of Czechoslovakia or its undue dependence on Germany would be regarded as a danger for Poland to be met by seizure of certain parts of Czechoslovak Silesia notably Teschen and Mährisch-Ostrau. Colonel Beck proposed that rest of Slovakia should then return to Hungary on the understanding that Slovaks would be granted a form of autonomy. Dr.

<sup>1</sup> No. 438.

Krofta had heard from a very reliable source that this proposal had already been raised with Hungarian Government. With Herr Sidor one of the Slovak leaders Colonel Beck had had a long conversation when Herr Sidor came to Poland to meet deputation of American Slovaks. Dr. Krofta could not tell me what Hungarian attitude was but believed it at present to be non-committal.

3. From another source Dr. Krofta had heard that if Czechoslovakia were attacked by Germany, and France did not come to her assistance, Poland would immediately occupy Teschen, and Mährisch-Ostrau. If, however, France intervened Poland would wait to see result. Dr. Krofta added with a smile that he had furthermore heard a perhaps less serious report that if England as well as France came to the assistance of Czechoslovakia Colonel Beck would be in favour of joining them forthwith though whether he would demand a price for his support had not been mentioned.

4. Dr. Krofta understood German Government were not very pleased with above Polish policy.

Repeated Berlin and Warsaw.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 479

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. R. I. Campbell (Paris)*

*No. 1537 [C 6953/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 12, 1938*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan on July 9 bringing with him a number of documents which, he said, indicated that a crisis might arise in the near future over Central Europe. He said that his Government had received information from various quarters to show that there was considerable activity in Germany, chiefly in the air.

2. He proceeded to read from some of these documents, whose contents are shortly summarised below:

3. The first was a report of a conversation with General Bodenschatz, who appears to be on Field-Marshal Göring's staff and who is reputed to be in the counsels of Field-Marshal Göring and of Herr Hitler himself. General Bodenschatz had said that the German Government, and Herr Hitler in particular, had been shocked and surprised at the fact that at the moment of the May crisis we had believed the various lies put about by the Czechoslovak Government. It was entirely untrue that there had been any concentration of German troops, and the attitude of France and England had driven the Führer to a state of extreme irritation. The German Government had no idea at that moment of making any move against the Czechoslovak Government. On the other hand, the German Government would not endure interminable delays, and if a settlement were not reached they would shortly be in a position to use force. The German fortifications on their

western frontier were being intensively strengthened and extended up to the Belgian and Netherlands frontiers.

4. In forwarding this report, the French Ambassador in Berlin had expressed his conviction that although the German Government might accept a temporary solution, they were determined ultimately on the employment of force. The fact that the German Government were beginning to make every sort of propaganda in an effort to prove Czechoslovakia's aggressive intentions made it, in the Ambassador's view, likely that they were contemplating aggressive action against that State.

5. Neither the report of the conversation with General Bodenschatz nor M. François-Poncet's comments contained any facts or definite indications in support of their gloomy prognostications.

6. M. Corbin then read a further telegram containing information gleaned from various French consular officers, who all confirmed that work on the western fortifications was being intensified,<sup>1</sup> three separate lines were being constructed and orders were being issued that work must be finished at all costs by August 15. It was therefore probable that at any moment after that date we might be exposed to the emergence of a sudden crisis. Herr Hitler was inaccessible at Berchtesgaden, doubtless evolving plans of action. M. François-Poncet drew attention also to German diplomatic activities in Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia and elsewhere with a view to obtaining a free hand for dealing with Czechoslovakia. M. François-Poncet expressed the hope that in the very near future a hint might be given in Berlin that if she broke the peace Germany could not count on the non-intervention of France and Great Britain. M. François-Poncet added the opinion that some scheme of neutrality for Czechoslovakia might possibly be devised.

7. A further telegram from M. François-Poncet reported an interview with Dr. Schacht, who expressed grave fears as to the situation. He said that the Czechoslovak Government must go much further than at present they seemed disposed to go, and that no scheme short of a practical dismemberment of Czechoslovakia would afford a settlement. M. François-Poncet had retorted that rather than allow herself to be dismembered Czechoslovakia would probably go to war. Dr. Schacht had also urged the desirability of devising some scheme of Czech neutrality. He had added that he had no contact nowadays with Herr Hitler, and had expressly urged that his name should not be mentioned.

8. M. Corbin said that if all the foregoing indications were to be accepted it seemed likely that a crisis might be upon us at an early date, and he enquired whether we had any information to confirm this. Sir Alexander Cadogan observed to His Excellency that in all that he had given him there were no definite facts or information. We ourselves were of course conscious of the danger of a crisis at any moment so long as the negotiations between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudetendeutsch were not brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that Sir Neville

<sup>1</sup> In a report of July 13, forwarded by Sir N. Henderson on July 14, H.M. Military Attaché in Berlin stated that this work was being 'carried on at abnormal pressure'.

Henderson had told him on July 8<sup>2</sup> of M. François-Poncet's fears, but that he (Sir Nevile Henderson) had not been able to adduce anything definite in support of them. On the whole Sir Alexander Cadogan told the Ambassador that he thought that recent indications which we had received combined to show that the German Government might be inclined to accept, provisionally at least, a settlement of the Sudetendeutsch question if that could be negotiated between Herr Henlein and the Czechoslovak Government. Their acceptance might of course be only provisional, and it was impossible to know what were their ultimate aims and intentions. He promised the Ambassador that if we obtained any further indications of the approach of a danger period, we should undoubtedly let the French Government know.

9. On the subject of the Czechoslovakian question, M. Corbin told Sir Alexander Cadogan that the French Government had been considering what might be done if the present negotiations came to a deadlock or threatened to break. They thought that it would be essential for the French and British Governments to attempt to bring the negotiators together again, but they did not see clearly how this could be done unless we could have some concrete proposals to put before them, and they would like therefore to discuss with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom the possibility of working out some proposals of the kind. Sir Alexander Cadogan told M. Corbin that apart from the difficulty of judging of these matters at this distance, our own information in regard to the actual progress of the negotiations was rather slender and certainly not sufficient to enable us to form a judgment on the whole. M. Corbin said that possibly the French Government's information was more complete than that in the possession of His Majesty's Government, in any case they would be glad to know whether we should be prepared to discuss the matter with them. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that he would mention the point to me, and we might examine such information as we had and let him know whether we should be prepared to proceed to an exchange of views on this subject.

I am, etc.

(For the Secretary of State)

WILLIAM STRANG

<sup>2</sup> Sir N. Henderson left Berlin for London on leave on July 5 and returned to Berlin on the morning of July 14.

**No. 480**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 14)*

*No. 342 Telegraphic [C 7004/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 13, 1938

At the end of a conversation with President of the Council this afternoon he asked me if I had any information regarding German intentions next week. When I replied that so far as I knew all was quiet there and German Minister for Foreign Affairs [? was] away from Berlin, Dr. Hodza said that



unconfirmed reports had reached him that there were more troops than were normal in Austria. Leading Czech Catholics had also heard from important French Catholics that there was an impression in Paris that something might be brewing in Germany, but he could not even enlighten me whether it was suggested that some attack or at least military demonstration against Czechoslovakia was in prospect or indeed what suggestion might be. Dr. Hodza who is impulsive realised that this was season for military exercises, and that his information was completely vague, but he would presumably not have mentioned such rumours unless he felt slight uneasiness. I have no confirmation of them.

Repeated to Paris and to Berlin Saving.

#### No. 481

*Mr. Campbell (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 14)*

*No. 467 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6993/1941/18]*

PARIS, July 13, 1938

Secretary General of Ministry for Foreign Affairs sent for me this afternoon to say that M. Daladier wished to assure His Majesty's Government that his reference<sup>1</sup> to the pacific resolution of Herr Hitler in the crisis of May 21 did not portend any attempt at a new French policy towards Germany or even at a Franco-German *détente* (in the present possibility of which, M. Léger added, the French Government had little faith). Had any new line of action been contemplated or intended M. Daladier would have made a point of first getting into touch with His Majesty's Government. He particularly wished to make this clear because of the relations of confidence existing between the Prime Minister and himself. His reasons for the remarks in question were the following: M. Daladier was afraid that the pressure which His Majesty's Government and the French Government were keeping up at Prague might be misinterpreted in Germany as a sign of weakness. If any such impression were formed in Germany or elsewhere the consequences would be highly dangerous. On the other hand he was certain that the only sure method of preventing Herr Hitler from an aggression against Czechoslovakia was to leave him in no doubt that France would honour her obligations towards that country. He had therefore thought it important to reaffirm the position of the French Government. At the same time he had wished to prevent his declaration from appearing offensive. In particular he desired to remove from Herr Hitler's mind any idea that the French Government wished to give the impression that a public defeat had been inflicted upon the Nazi Government in May, and that some vigorous demonstration was necessary to restore German prestige. He had therefore made a special reference to Germany's resolution for peace and to the Chancellor's peaceful aspirations (little though he in fact believed in them).

<sup>1</sup> On July 12, in a speech at a banquet given by the Paris Provence and Languedoc Association. On Czechoslovak affairs M. Daladier spoke as indicated in the text.

When I asked whether it was as a result of any recent news from Berlin that M. Daladier had felt it necessary to reaffirm the French Government's position M. Léger replied that this was not the case but that the President of the Council had for some weeks intended to do so whenever a natural opportunity should occur.

No. 482

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 16)*

*No. 248 [C 7089/1941/18]*

His Majesty's Minister at Prague presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him the under-mentioned memorandum.

BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE.

*July 13, 1938*

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 482

*Memorandum by the Observers attached to H.M. Legation regarding a Conversation with Herr Frank*

1. We called on Herr Frank to thank him for having placed a great deal of material at our disposal regarding occurrences in the German-speaking districts and to hear his views on the Sudeten German question.

2. Herr Frank stated that the Sudeten Germans had been three times betrayed in their efforts to obtain their rights, in 1918, when a Constitution was imposed on them without their consent, in 1926, when requests for concessions merely resulted in conditions becoming worse and on 18 February, 1937 when further pledges were given and nothing done for a year. He was most insistent that the present readiness of the Sudeten German Party to negotiate was to be regarded as a final effort at compromise and would not be repeated.

3. The Party, realising that a demand for an 'Anschluss' with Germany might precipitate a world war, were prepared to seek a compromise within the frontiers of the Republic, although, in his view, the overwhelming majority of Sudeten Germans desired an 'Anschluss'. He repeated the Party opinion that the eight points of the Carlsbad Programme should form the basis of any settlement. We asked him how it would be possible for Sudeten Germans to practise a National Socialist philosophy within the Czechoslovakian Republic and he replied that, first, there should be absolute freedom in disseminating Germanic and National Socialist culture. The study of German literature and history should be unrestricted. A German view of German history and in particular the official German view of the National Socialist world outlook today should be taught in the schools. All censorship of the Sudeten German press and of school books should cease. There should be no restriction on the sale of German books, magazines and newspapers. The Sudeten Germans who, as a Germanic people, liked parading and

marching, should be allowed to do so. The personality of Herr Hitler should be permitted to be brought home to Sudeten Germans by pictures and other means and the Nazi flag should be allowed to be flown.

4. He went on to contrast the unarmed state of the Sudeten Germans with the highly armed state of the Czechs in the German-speaking districts. Sudeten Germans must have self-protection (Selbstschutz). S.A. and S.S. were not necessary, nor any political formation subject to orders from Berlin, but a parallel force was being prepared in the 'Ordner'.

5. He said that the economic position was bad, alleging a mutual boycott between Czechs and Germans as a contributory cause. He accused the Czech authorities of discriminating unfairly against Sudeten German firms and work people. He added that foreign and especially American firms were reluctant to do business with Sudeten Germans owing to the factor of political uncertainty. He anticipated critical conditions next autumn.

6. The Czech Government had, on the surface at least, suggested remedies, particularly in the recent codification, made under the auspices of Dr. Hodza, of all rights reserved to minorities under the Constitution. He regarded this codification as valueless. It merely reasserted safeguards which had never been put into practice. Too many clauses by their ambiguous wording provided the authorities with loopholes. For example, it was stated that the German language 'may' be used in local courts, while the Sudeten Germans demanded that the German language should be used. The phrase 'if possible' weakened provisions regarding contracts and work, which would otherwise have benefited Sudeten Germans. He complained that the Czech Law regarding the Defence of the State was almost invariably invoked to their detriment whenever contracts for public works were allotted. Further, under the codification Sudeten Germans were regarded, not as a nation, but as a minority. They did not wish to be considered as Czechoslovak citizens in a National State, but as German citizens in a State of Nationalities (Nationalitätenstaat). In his opinion, a Statute common to all 'nations' in the Czechoslovak State would be neither fair nor workable. The different conditions prevailing in the various areas required different remedies.

7. He concluded by deploring what he called the optimistic attitude of the Prague, Paris and London press in regard to the present negotiations. In his opinion the negotiations were not proceeding smoothly. He alleged that certain Czech official circles felt that British and French pressure for concessions to the Sudeten German Party could be ignored. The Czech minor official in the country districts was once more, as before 21 May last, becoming correspondingly arrogant.

8. Herr Frank offered us a copy of a confidential memorandum presented by his Party to the Czech Government and also to certain gentlemen in London, of whom he mentioned Sir Robert Vansittart and Colonel Christie. The contents of the memorandum, which is concerned with the forthcoming Statute, Herr Frank alleged to have been betrayed through Czech channels and to be about to be published in the French Press. A Czech editor had approached him with a copy in his hand. As the Czechs had broken their

word, he did not feel bound to keep the memorandum confidential. We thought it wiser to decline his offer until we had instructions.

BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE.

July 9, 1938

No. 483

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 15)*

*No. 343 Telegraphic [C 7055/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 14, 1938

My telegram No. 341.<sup>1</sup>

President of Council whom I saw on July 13 had nothing very satisfactory to tell me in regard to Nationalities question. While he had the impression from Herr Kundt whom he had seen on July 11 that Sudeten leaders might be ready to compromise, Dr. Hodza felt he had not sufficient grounds for optimism or pessimism. Sudeten negotiators were now in possession of all his proposals. These had so far only been communicated to them privately because they were not finally settled and contained if I understood him correctly an alternative on which the Cabinet and Parliamentary Committees had still to pronounce.

2. I asked President of Council whether his two suggestions mentioned in my telegram No. 334<sup>2</sup> had been approved and gathered that they had not been and perhaps had not even been submitted to the Cabinet while the President also had made certain reservations. I reminded Dr. Hodza that he had told me he expected to be able to grant between 70 and 80 per cent. of substance of Sudeten demands and he professed confidence in his ability to do so if not by one means then by another indicating one or two alternative ideas which seemed to me rather unconvincing. Unless however, he added, Sudeten party were prepared to make some compromise a crisis was inevitable.

3. I asked whether it was now proposed to divide the programme into a Language law, a Nationality Statute and a re-organisation essential for administration as had been indicated in the press. Dr. Hodza replied that Language Law might be dealt with separately but that Nationality Statute and scheme for self-administration must be regarded as a whole. Self-administration was a matter of most importance and Dr. Hodza admitted that he was meeting with strong opposition on the subject in the Cabinet. He hoped however that difficulties would be solved in course of meeting between Cabinet and President of Republic to take place on Monday July 18. Proposals adopted would be communicated to Sudeten representatives as soon as possible afterwards and if they were in a position by then to indicate their assent, Parliament could perhaps meet at end of the week, otherwise a meeting might have to be postponed until later in the month. (The earlier date would seem to me hopelessly optimistic.)

<sup>1</sup> No. 474.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 467, note 5.

4. Somewhat to my surprise President of Council made no reference to any new Sudeten proposals such as those mentioned to me later by Dr. Schiessl who had no doubt been aware that I was already in possession of the latest Sudeten memorandum. In the circumstances I betrayed no knowledge of them and gained the impression, as did my French colleague at an interview with Dr. Hodza today, that he had not yet been informed of them.

Repeated to Berlin.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

#### No. 484

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 15)*

*No. 344 Telegraphic [C 7050/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 14, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

From a well informed source I have heard that the last cabinet meeting on July 12 was stormy and that President of Council failed to obtain approval for his programme of administrative reform. It was challenged by Dr. Schiessl who was supported by the majority of the Cabinet. My informant feared a crisis was to be expected in the immediate future and that on Monday July 18 the President of the Republic might have to decide whether to accept resignation of Dr. Hodza or to insist on that of Dr. Schiessl. The first event would presumably (?create)<sup>2</sup> a very serious national and international crisis and the second event would also be unfortunate as indicating a serious division of opinion in the present coalition on such an issue.

2. My French colleague who saw Dr. Hodza today did not give the impression that a serious crisis was at hand. While Dr. Hodza mentioned to him specifically that he was having difficulties with Dr. Schiessl he did not do so in such a manner as to indicate that any question of resignation on either side was involved. On the other hand some, if not all, information in foregoing paragraph was I understand communicated to me at the request of Dr. Hodza himself who preferred not to say such things direct but yet no doubt wanted to obtain any assistance I could give him. French Minister found Dr. Hodza rather indefinite in regard to manner and rate of progress but hoped that situation would clear after meeting between Cabinet and President next Monday.

3. I am applying for an audience to discuss situation with President before that date.

Repeated Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 483.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.



*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 15)*

*No. 345 Telegraphic [C 7045/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 14, 1938

My telegram No. 342.<sup>1</sup>

My French colleague informs me that he received a recent visit from Herr Kundt, the Sudeten German politician, who mentioned that there was again a movement of Czech troops towards the frontier, and that there were signs of a return of the atmosphere which prevailed prior to May 21. The French Minister enquired of the President of the Council if there was any truth in this report of troop movements and received an emphatic denial.

2. The observers have just returned from a tour along a considerable part of the Bavarian frontier and saw practically no troops of any kind.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 480.

No. 486

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 15)*

*No. 346 Telegraphic [C 7056/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 14, 1938

My German colleague called on July 14 and expressed pessimistic views in regard to likelihood of Czechoslovak Government granting an acceptable settlement of nationality question. I repeated Dr. Hodza's estimate of his ability to grant between 70 per cent. and 80 per cent. of substance of Sudeten requirements whereupon Dr. Eisenlohr rejoined that corresponding estimate placed by the Sudeten German leaders upon value of Government proposals as hitherto revealed amounted to about 20 per cent. I declined to accept this as serious, pointing out that if they were in such a frame of mind the outlook did indeed seem hopeless.

2. He said that amongst the most important concessions required were

(1) a Language Law which admitted real equality, and

(2) the recognition of nationality as a collective arrangement since individual rights did not suffice. In regard to a Language Law Dr. Krofta had recently spoken to him of a reduction in present population percentage required for the use of a non-Czech language from 20 per cent. to anything between 18 per cent. and 14 per cent. (Dr. Krofta has mentioned to me 15 per cent.). In the press there were also estimates ranging down to 10 per cent. This pettiness denoted a complete failure to rise to the needs of the situation. Why, he added as a personal suggestion, could not the Government pass a law which provided that the two languages should be regarded as equal, that school children would be required in future to learn both Czech and German, and which then perhaps went on to enact that for a limited period of say five years while the necessary staff were being trained certain limits

might be maintained? I pointed out that (?one)<sup>1</sup> difficulty was demand of other nationalities notably the Polish for identical treatment. He thought such a difficulty ought not to be allowed to stand in the way or could be met possibly by limiting to Bohemia the equality of German and Czech languages. The Language Law had, he continued, not merely a practical but a great symbolic importance for the Reich and doubtless also for Sudeten areas. This I believe to be true but from remarks which Dr. Hodza as well as Dr. Krofta have made to me I fear such a proposal as the foregoing would meet with strongest Czech opposition on grounds of politics and prestige. Nevertheless as considerable importance may attach to Dr. Eisenlohr's point of view I propose to take the next opportunity of representing it to President Benes or Dr. Hodza.

3. I showed no sympathy to German Minister over his second claim. I said that ever since this idea of giving each nationality corporative status had been launched in the six Bills tabled by Sudeten German party a year ago the Government had intimated that it was quite unacceptable. As interpreted by the party in their latest proposals it seemed to me to go at least as far and in fact further than a federal system which they professed not to demand. From what I had heard of these proposals they would amount to territorial autonomy combined with a kind of national exterritoriality. Such a system existed nowhere in the world and might obviously effect horizontal cleavage in the State if indeed it were administratively practicable at all. On the other hand if it were true that importance was attached to substance rather than to form I understood Dr. Hodza had various proposals for giving Sudeten German party a large measure of satisfaction. I alluded to idea of a Curia in a Landstag whereupon Dr. Eisenlohr said that according to a draft he had seen the President or Government proposed to retain the right of nominating members in addition to elected members. Moreover why should Curia not be in Central Parliament, upon which I pointed out that if differentiation in nationalities went up to the very top it would mean the establishment of a state alongside a state.

4. Dr. Eisenlohr seemed to weaken slightly in his insistence on concession (2). He went on to stress the great importance of using this unique occasion for making a settlement which if it could not satisfy the Sudeten Germans would at least have a calming effect. He enquired also whether if Czech offer came within perhaps 20 per cent. or 25 per cent. of an acceptable minimum there might be a prospect of British and French Governments intervening to insist on gap being bridged. This I could not answer but . . .<sup>1</sup> that these Governments were certainly anxious to assist in any way they properly could to bring about a reasonable and far-reaching settlement.

5. My German colleague alluded also to Sir N. Henderson's last conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop and evidently attached great importance to prospect which it seemed to indicate of negotiating some general settlement satisfactory to Germans if only Czech question could be got out of the

<sup>1</sup> The text is here uncertain.

way.<sup>2</sup> He also expressed warm appreciation of M. Daladier's recent speech.<sup>3</sup> It may therefore be that his object was not to prepare my mind for failure but genuinely to press for some settlement which could at least be accepted as provisional. When I expressed hope that German Government would try to influence Sudeten Germans towards accommodation as His Majesty's Government were doing in the case of Czechoslovak Government he took the usual line that as Prague Government were solely to blame all concessions must come from them. German Government would not therefore give any advice one way or the other but he believed the Henlein party genuinely wished to arrive at an agreed settlement. That it would be negotiated even in principle within the next few days he considered to be out of the question.

Repeated Berlin Saving.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> For a reference by Sir N. Henderson to this statement see No. 513.

<sup>3</sup> On July 12. See No. 481, note 1.

### No. 487

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 15)*

*No. 330 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7052/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 14, 1938

Mr. Newton's telegram No. 342.<sup>1</sup>

I can discover no indication of any unusual military measures being contemplated in the immediate future.

Training is in full swing and many units are engaged in normal moves and exercises.

My information about military situation in Austria is scanty but all tends to show that German troops in Austria are there for declared objects of instruction and demonstration.

There is at the moment much more evidence of military activity in connection with the defence of the Western frontiers than of any concrete preparations against Czechoslovakia.

Military Attaché was in Leipzig area on Saturday and Sunday and could find nothing abnormal.

Generally speaking I would regard military position here as the same as it was a month and more ago, namely that, while aggression is not actually contemplated, it is considered likely that Dr. Benes will not be able or does not intend to satisfy the Sudeten. The result of a deadlock or an incident is unforeseeable and the German army has consequently been ordered to hold itself, short of actual mobilisation or concentration, in readiness for all eventualities.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 480.

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)**No. 191 Telegraphic [C 6920/1941/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 14, 1938*

1. The information contained in your telegrams No. 341<sup>1</sup> and 291 Saving<sup>2</sup> seems to me to put a rather more favourable complexion on the situation than earlier information, and I assume from your comment that you share this view.

2. I think, however, that you ought to know that I have received information that Herr Henlein took an extremely pessimistic view of the situation as it stood on or about July 8.

3. According to Herr Henlein the proposals handed to the Sudeten Germans by the President of the Council on June 18 were private and not official, and could not by any stretch of imagination be regarded as giving the Sudeten Germans any form of self-administration, except in very minor local affairs, or as being an honest effort to find a solution. Further proposals handed to the Sudeten Germans by the President of the Council on July 1 were a great disappointment, and the parts that dealt with administrative regulations offered nothing new and contained no trace of any grant of self-administration, not even the minimum which had been indicated in the earlier private proposals. The position on July 8 was that the President of the Council was trying to weave into a final draft certain portions of his original private proposals, since he feared that friendly nations would not regard the draft as an honest effort to reach a solution.

4. Herr Henlein also complained of deliberately dilatory tactics of the Czechoslovak Government, and of their intention to call Parliament together at an early date (the date was apparently fixed for July 21) in order to push their proposals through with the available Government majority against the votes of the Sudeten Germans.

5. The result was that Herr Henlein no longer trusted Dr. Hodza, and saw in the latter's tactics an intention to misrepresent the Sudeten Germans and to deceive the world. His promise to come to a proper understanding with the Sudeten Germans before submitting the final draft to Parliament had, he alleged, been flagrantly broken, and any effort to discuss the original Sudeten memorandum had been deliberately avoided. Henlein was convinced that President Benes did not take the pressure from London and Paris at all seriously and thought that he could fool them both and count on their support as on May 21.

6. I should be glad to know how far you think the foregoing paragraphs can be fairly said to represent the present situation; and how far it has been modified by the later developments reported in your telegrams referred to above.

7. If the present situation were anything like Herr Henlein's description,

<sup>1</sup> No. 474.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. See No. 474, note 2.

I should be prepared to ask the French Government to join with His Majesty's Government in bringing the strongest pressure to bear on the Czechoslovak Government, or in default of French collaboration, to act in Prague alone. Do you think that any such *démarche* in Prague is at present called for?

8. I should be grateful for an early reply. You should, in any event, watch the situation and send me a further report to reach me not later than Monday, July 18. I shall be seeing the French Ministers in Paris next week, and if pressure is to be brought on the French Government to exercise their influence in Prague, that will be my opportunity. You will have seen from the memorandum handed to the French Ambassador on July 7<sup>3</sup> that I have already reproached the French Government for their lack of zeal in supporting our action at Prague.

9. If it should appear that a deadlock is imminent, the arguments that I would propose to use at Prague would be either or both of the following:

(a) Unless the Czechoslovak Government will make an early and comprehensive settlement with the Sudeten Germans, I foresee that Herr Henlein will ask for a plebiscite, which public opinion in this country would almost certainly feel to be a not unreasonable proposal. The consequences of this would be very present to the mind of the Czechoslovak Government. (I have already used this argument, yesterday, with the Czechoslovak Minister.)

(b) I should warn the Czechoslovak Government that His Majesty's Government might feel it their duty publicly to propose the appointment of an independent mediator, and place upon the Czechoslovak Government the responsibility of accepting or rejecting the proposal.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>3</sup> No. 472.

### No. 489

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. R. I. Campbell (Paris)*

*No. 1571 [C 7046/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 14, 1938*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called to see me this morning at his own request and said that he had given Sir A. Cadogan a few days ago a report<sup>1</sup> on the information recently supplied to the French Government by the French Ambassador in Berlin. The gist of this information had been to show that the German Government were proceeding with great activity upon the fortification of their western frontier and to give expression to the anxieties felt by the Ambassador in regard to German intentions in the near future. In the light of these observations, the Ambassador wished to know whether we had any new information at our disposal which might either corroborate or disprove the kind of view taken by the French Ambassador in Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 479.



2. I told M. Corbin that with him I felt great difficulty in speaking with any assurance in regard to matters which lay so largely within the range of personal decision by Herr Hitler, but that when Sir N. Henderson had been in England a few days ago I had put the same question to him. His judgment, necessarily also given under great reserve of the admitted risk of being disproved by events, had been that he did not himself think that the German Government were likely to embark upon violent action in regard to Czechoslovakia. He thought that the only circumstances in which this course would be followed would be if there were a serious disturbance involving loss of life among the Sudeten Deutsch. We had also received here a good deal of disquieting information in the same sense as that supplied to the French Government by their Ambassador, and it was, I supposed, quite impossible to do anything else but keep one's judgment in ordered suspense between the fear of serious developments and the hope that these might be, in the event, avoided.

3. I told M. Corbin that I had seen the Czechoslovak Minister yesterday, who had returned from Prague at the end of last week. He had told me that, when he left Prague, the negotiating atmosphere had been, so far as he had been able to learn from Dr. Hodza and representatives of the Sudeten Deutsch, favourable. I had put two considerations to M. Masaryk that I had thought I might usefully place also before M. Corbin. The first had been to suggest to him the possible unwisdom of the adoption by the Czechoslovak Government of the plan of submitting all their legislative proposals, whether agreed or not by the Sudeten Deutsch, at one and the same time to Parliament. I appreciated the desire of M. Benes to avoid giving the impression that there was no limit beyond which he might not be pushed; on the other hand, I thought it of great importance to avoid a head-on collision such as might arise if the Czechoslovak Government took the attitude of pushing all their proposals through Parliament in a kind of 'take it or leave it' temper. I had suggested to M. Masaryk that it might be possible that they should introduce legislation in regard to the points on which agreement had been reached, saying that other matters were still under discussion.

4. The other consideration that I had put to M. Masaryk was this: If and when the present negotiations resulted in a deadlock that could not be resolved by any other means, it seemed to me reasonably certain that in some form or other the immediate consequence would be the proposal for a plebiscite. We here knew very well all the objections that could fairly be held to lie against the plebiscite plan. On the other hand, these objections would never get across British public opinion that would in such circumstances almost certainly feel, with the false analogy of the Saar in their minds, that the plebiscite proposal, whatever its merits or demerits, was a better way out than any other. The superficial argument would be that Czechoslovakia itself had been created on the basis of self-determination, and that there was nothing very shocking about applying the same principle to a problem that seemed otherwise insoluble. If the Czechoslovak Government felt, as they no doubt did, the gravest objection to the plebiscite proposal,

it was another argument for reinforcing the necessity of reaching a solution by negotiation.

5. The Ambassador said that he appreciated the force of what I had said, and the French Government were as much impressed as we were with the importance of reaching a settlement by peaceful means. Everything, however, depended upon the measure of goodwill from various quarters that was brought to the problem, and on this we were necessarily ignorant. This applied also to the estimate of value that might be found to attach, if and when it was called into operation, to our proposal for a mediator. On this point I made it plain to M. Corbin that, if our mediation proposal ever took shape, it would not be in our mind to assume any responsibility as a Government for definite proposals, either by way of giving instructions to the mediator or by way of ourselves becoming sponsor for proposals that he might in the course of his contacts be led to make. Our idea would simply be that we should, with the concurrence of both parties in Czechoslovakia, place at their disposal the services of the wisest, most influential and most experienced mediator that we could supply.

I am, etc.

HALIFAX

## CHAPTER VI

# Proposal by His Majesty's Government to send Viscount Runciman on a special mission to Prague: acceptance of proposal by the Czechoslovak Govern- ment

(July 15-23, 1938)

No. 490

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax)*  
*No. 348 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7064/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 15, 1938, 5.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 191<sup>1</sup> and my telegrams Nos. 343,<sup>2</sup> 344<sup>3</sup> and 346.<sup>4</sup>

In view of obscurity of present situation and perhaps critical nature of the meeting between the Cabinet and the President on Monday I would like your authority to use argument (a) in paragraph 9 of your telegram under reference at my audience fixed for 11.0. a.m. tomorrow July 16.

2. That is to say, I would like to say either as from myself but preferably with your authority that if it appeared that the Czechoslovak Government were to blame for failing to reach by negotiation an early and comprehensive settlement and in consequence Henlein asked for a plebiscite, British public opinion would almost certainly feel such a proposal to be not unreasonable.

3. I should be grateful for early reply by telephone, if possible, en clair.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 488.

<sup>2</sup> No. 483.

<sup>3</sup> No. 484.

<sup>4</sup> No. 486.

<sup>5</sup> On the same day Mr. Newton was informed that he might speak in the sense suggested.

No. 491

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 16, 8.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 349 Telegraphic [C 7132/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 15, 1938, 7.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 301.<sup>1</sup>

Air Attaché was informed today by General Staff that a number of reservists (about 80,000, to be confirmed later) were being released on July 16 and that next batch was not due for joining up until July 25. This would leave the army short of about 80,000 reservists all next week. General Staff

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram reported a communiqué on the release of reservists called up on May 21.

were a little uneasy because they were anticipating some trouble in Sudeten areas during this period as Parliament was reassembling on July 21. (No official announcement of summoning of Parliament has yet been made and my latest information is contained in paragraph 3 of my telegram No. 343).<sup>2</sup>

Air Attaché was also informed that a considerable movement of troops was taking place all over Germany, but that these moves did not appear to be directed to any particular area. He was further told that no additional troops were being sent into Sudeten or frontier areas for fear of Government being accused of taking provocative action.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

<sup>2</sup> No. 483.

### No. 492

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 16, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 350 Telegraphic [C 7137/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 15, 1938, 7.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 349.<sup>1</sup>

Czech press of July 15 discusses the rumours that the Sudeten German party is organizing a general strike. It is suggested that general strike is to coincide with publication of Nationalities Statute and designed to blackmail Government and press calls on the latter to deal with any such movement with a firm hand. The 'Prager Press' publishes a warning issued to Czechoslovak trade union organisation that such a strike is in preparation and calling on labour to maintain calm and to take no part in what is clearly an agitation hostile to the State.

2. The Sudeten German party's press organ on the other hand declares that the whole story is a fabrication and part of a campaign of lies designed to poison political atmosphere and to disturb the progress of conversations between the Sudeten German party and Government.

Repeated to Berlin Saving.

<sup>1</sup> No. 491.

### No. 493

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 194 Telegraphic [C 7204/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 16, 1938, 2.15 p.m.

I have sounded Lord Runciman as to his willingness to undertake the office of independent mediator in case of need and he has accepted on the understanding that he will not be asked to proceed unless both sides agree to receive him and to explain to him fully their respective points of view.

He wishes to inform himself as to the situation and it would be most useful if he could talk with someone having first hand knowledge. Would it be

possible for Mr. Troutbeck<sup>1</sup> to advance his leave by a week or so and arrange to arrive in London for this purpose as soon as possible?

<sup>1</sup> First Secretary at H.M. Legation, Prague.

No. 494

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 16, 4.30 p.m.)*  
*No. 306 Telegraphic [C 7154/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 16, 1938, 2.30 p.m.

I called on State Secretary yesterday evening and found him no less discouraged over the situation in Prague than the Czechoslovak Minister here (see my telegram No. 305).<sup>1</sup> He read me parts of latest telegram from the German Minister at Prague who appeared to be equally pessimistic. According to the latter it was not 75 per cent. of Sudeten demands for equality of treatment which were likely to be granted by the Czechs but a bare 20 per cent.: Czech extremists were more irreconcilable than ever: stricter administrative and additional military precautionary measures were being taken in Sudeten areas: Krofta was representing minor concessions as extremely generous and completely failing to comprehend real gravity of the situation; and Sudeten Party had earnestly warned Dr. Hodza against unilateral submission to Parliament of draft laws unacceptable to the party etc.

State Secretary admitted that above was a general view which did not enter into the details of negotiations of which he pleaded ignorance. He begged however that if peaceful solution (which the State Secretary himself certainly desires) is to be assured, something should be done without delay (a) to prepare public opinion in Czechoslovakia for concessions which will have to be made, and (b) to discourage those Czech extremists who desired nothing better than to bring matters to a head now at all costs. Prevention was better than cure and it would, in his opinion, be too late if we were to wait till there was a deadlock before warning the Czechoslovak Government that there were limits beyond which they could not go without losing British support. He had, he added, come to the conclusion that it had been a grave mistake for German press to have remained as moderate as it had been during the past three or four weeks.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Sir N. Henderson reported that M. Mastny (i) had no confirmation that Herr Henlein had visited Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden and (ii) 'was perturbed over rumours of German intention to settle Sudeten question before the Party Congress at Nuremberg in September. According to him (M. Mastny), Field-Marshal Göring's plan was, after overcoming Czech resistance by overwhelming air attack, to occupy Sudeten areas and then invite conference of the Powers to recognize the accomplishment of the fact.' Sir N. Henderson commented that 'there is nothing inherently improbable in the above idea, which Field-Marshal Göring may well hold. Rumour also has it that Herr Hitler himself is in one of his black moods. The situation of Austria and the incompleteness of the Siegfried line are contributory causes, but also the uncertainty as to what line to adopt in the Sudeten question. It seems consequently all the more necessary for strong line to be taken at Prague particularly by the French Government.'



I . . .<sup>2</sup> combated this last theory on usual grounds, and strongly urged that present comparative moderation should be maintained and particularly during the coming week, which seemed likely, in my opinion, to be a critical one, both on account of your presence in Paris during the Royal visit<sup>3</sup> and in view of possibility of negotiations which I understood were likely to take place at Prague (see paragraph 4 of Mr. Newton's telegram No. 343).<sup>4</sup>

I also pointed out to the State Secretary that it was not easy to discourage Czech extremists without encouraging unduly Sudeten or German extremists. I thought it useful in this connexion to mention rumours prevalent here of German desire to liquidate Sudeten question before Nuremberg Party Congress in September. State Secretary flatly denied any such intention and repeated what he has said to me before as to German Government's own readiness to be patient. It was, he said, psychology of the Sudetens which caused him uneasiness. They might blow up at any moment, and that was why he begged that we would not defer warning the Czech extremists until it was too late.

State Secretary finally told me that it was possible that he might be in possession of fuller details as to exact state of negotiations by Monday next, in which case he would ask me to come to see him. I encouraged him to do so on the ground that a frank statement on the subject and co-operation with the German Government might be useful.

Anxiety of the State Secretary was patent. This may be partly due to feeling of responsibility in the absence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and to being kept in the dark—as Ministry in general is—as to the real intentions of German Government. But it is, I fear, also largely due to definite conviction here that Czechs have no intention of introducing a comprehensive scheme which must inevitably involve a measure of Federalism of some sort, and to real apprehension of dangerous crisis which is likely to ensue if Nationality Statute, possibly accompanied by three years Military Service Law, is adopted by Czech Parliament regardless of Sudeten agreement or disagreement.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Their Majesties the King and Queen were visiting France on July 19.

<sup>4</sup> No. 483.

#### No. 495

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18)*

*No. 352 Telegraphic: by bag<sup>1</sup> [C 7139/1941/18]*

My telegram No. 347.<sup>2</sup>

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938

My impressions from a frank audience lasting for two and a half hours may be summed up as follows. Firstly that the President and Government

<sup>1</sup> This telegram, and those printed as Nos. 496, 497, 500, 501, 504 and 505, were not numbered as Saving telegrams, although sent by bag.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that he was about to have an audience with President Benes. See No. 490.

are likely to reach the limit of concessions which they consider possible by the middle of next week; secondly, that the prospects of agreement with the Henlein party are poor, little more than toleration being hoped for; and thirdly that, despite plain speaking on my part, the Government will not consent to wait very long before enacting their proposals. At the outset I told President Benes that I was anxious as to how the situation was developing, and at the close I had to say that my anxiety had not been dissipated.

2. The main questions on which I sought information were the reported Cabinet dissensions, the length to which the Government were prepared to go in granting self-administration, and the procedure which they would follow in order to ensure that before Parliament met the Sudeten representatives had all reasonable opportunity for negotiating on the Government proposals as finally communicated to them and reaching an agreed settlement if such were possible.

3. The President admitted the existence of difficulties both within the political committee of the Cabinet and within the Parliamentary committee of six representing the Coalition parties but intimated that there was no danger of a crisis. The most critical stage had, however, now been reached for the Cabinet, Parliament, press and public. If the Cabinet and Parliamentary committees could be brought to agree, the programme could undoubtedly be put through. The chief points at issue were the powers to be conferred, firstly on the provincial Diets, and secondly on the proposed national Curiae. The Cabinet, which had at first raised no objections, had subsequently had misgivings owing to the criticism of leading party members but would now, as a result of interviews which the President had had with Dr. Sramek and others inclined to opposition, accept the Curia in principle. It was a system which had been appreciated by the Czechs themselves and worked well in Moravia, where it had existed before the war, whereas there had been constant difficulties in the Diet in Prague, where there had been no Curia. The President had also insisted that the powers conferred on the Diet and the Curiae should be as wide as possible. This he had done so far in general terms but early next week the powers would have to be defined and the President for his part would press for the inclusion of as many as possible of the Henlein claims. In particular the powers to be exercised by the Curia independently must be no sham but a reality. Decisions were to be taken as a result of meetings to be held by the Cabinet committee and the Parliamentary committee on Monday and of a meeting of the Cabinet with himself on Tuesday. The final draft should therefore be ready by about Thursday and it was proposed to communicate it to the Sudeten German representatives at a full dress meeting to be attended by all the members of the Cabinet committee.

4. The President seemed to anticipate, as did Dr. Hodza in his conversation with me July 13,<sup>3</sup> that the Sudeten German party would have no difficulty in making up its mind within a few days, seeing that they had been kept fully informed of what was under consideration. The Government proposals could of course be discussed but only slight alterations would be

<sup>3</sup> See No. 483.

possible as the Cabinet and parties would have gone to their utmost limit. I pointed out that, while I did not wish to suggest any criticism, the Government would in fact have taken from June 8 until say July 21 before communicating their official reply to the Sudeten memoranda. The document would be a substantial one and it might seem unreasonable, not only to the Sudeten Germans, but to public opinion abroad if the Sudeten negotiators for their part were not allowed time both to reply and to negotiate. If there were to be a time limit, or at any rate a short one, it would look like an ultimatum. Dr. Benes showed dislike of this representation of the position, saying that if the party was acting in good faith it would make up its mind without much delay, whereas if it were not (as I fear he believed to be the case) they could not be allowed indefinitely to prolong the negotiations and resulting tension. I rejoined that I had heard from the German Minister that he expected the Sudeten negotiators to present a long memorandum of their observations so soon as the Government proposals had been officially communicated to them. I presumed therefore that there would be no question of closing the negotiations or bringing the proposals before Parliament until any such observations had not only been received but negotiated upon to a point where it appeared clear either that the Sudeten negotiators were not acting in good faith or that no agreement could be reached. Dr. Benes replied that he could not tell me what the procedure would be as it had not yet been decided or even considered. At the same time he reminded me of the strong advice given by the British and French Governments to lose no time in going to the limit of what was possible. With this advice the Czechoslovak Government had agreed and a dangerous internal situation would arise if there were much further delay as there would be criticism of the German manoeuvres and manifestations of impatience and perhaps chauvinism (compare paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of my telegram No. 335).<sup>4</sup>

5. I asked the President also for his views on the suggestion which you had made to the Czechoslovak Minister in London as recorded in paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 192.<sup>5</sup> The President felt that the adoption of such a course would be extremely dangerous. Apart from the possible effect mentioned above of further delay on Czech feeling, it would put the Czechoslovak Government in a very bad position if they failed to make a settlement as a whole. The magnitude of their concessions would soon be forgotten and all attention concentrated on the very points where no further concessions could be made. The Czechoslovak Government would then be held responsible for not making still further concessions and given no credit for those previously made. If, moreover, there were further delay the German Government would only continue its campaign. I pointed out that such

<sup>4</sup> No. 467.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. This telegram recorded a conversation between Lord Halifax and the Czechoslovak Minister on July 13, at which Lord Halifax had suggested that the Czechoslovak Government might embody in legislation any points on which agreement had been reached, and leave the door open for further discussion, rather than present to Parliament, on a given date, a body of legislation covering the whole field of negotiation irrespective of the stage which the negotiations had then reached. See No. 489.

a campaign would be all the more violent if it appeared that the Czechoslovak Government had said its last word. He replied that the Czechoslovak Government would at least be in a better position to meet it as they would have shown their good faith and goodwill by doing all that lay in their power.

6. In reply to an enquiry the President admitted that while the Sudeten German party might tolerate the Government settlement he had little hope of their agreeing to it. If the moderates wished to do so they would not have the courage to stand up to the extremists and he evidently feared that the majority of the negotiators although drawn from the moderate elements were insincere and disloyal, taking their orders from the Reich. He said, for example, that a certain German lawyer who is acting for the German Government in private litigation in Prague had shown the Czech lawyers the text of all the documents privately communicated by Dr. Hodza to the Sudeten negotiators and had proceeded to comment on the contents. I observed to Dr. Benes that whether the party were sincere or not it remained just as important for the Czechoslovak Government to give as little pretext as possible for any accusation that they had not given the Sudeten party any fair opportunity to negotiate. Dr. Benes took refuge in his previous statement that the procedure and date for the introduction of the Government measures into Parliament had not been fixed.

7. I told the President that I understood that Dr. Hodza hoped to be able to grant between 70 and 80 per cent. of the Sudeten claims in substance though not in form but that such a percentage would include the two ideas that the Curia should have an independent competence and its own administrative organ with its own territory. He replied that while the powers of the Curia had not yet been settled it would certainly not be granted a specific territory as the territorial division of the country by nationalities could not be admitted. I mentioned the German Minister's remark that he had heard that the President would retain power to nominate members to the Curia in addition to those elected. Dr. Benes admitted that this was in the draft for consideration but said that whether adopted or not such nomination would only be in proportion to the elected parties so that the balance would not be altered. In reply to a further enquiry the President said that the self-administration which would be granted to the Sudeten Germans under the Government proposals would be exercised in the parishes and municipalities and also in the administrative areas (Bezirke). It would moreover exist in the powers of the Curia which would, however, relate to a nationality and not to a territory.

8. Finally I told the President that I hoped it would strengthen his hand in dealing with the Cabinet and Parliamentary parties next week if I repeated the warning which you had given to the Czechoslovak Minister in London with regard to the British attitude towards an eventual demand for a plebiscite. I therefore read to him the last paragraph of my telegram No. 348<sup>6</sup> from the words 'If it appeared. . . .' His comment was that a plebiscite involved a cession of territory and would never be admitted by the Czecho-

<sup>6</sup> No. 490.



slovak people who would rather fight. He went on to say that the Government and parties had gone further than he had originally thought they could be brought to do in preparing the nationality settlement and the difficulties had been such that Dr. Hodza had twice spoken about resignation. The Czechoslovak Government had gone very far indeed and had moreover accepted an unusual degree of intervention by foreign Governments. It would be unjust not to recognise the efforts they had made and especially so when comparison was made with other countries. The Czechoslovak solution would, he believed, have eventually to be adopted by other countries with populations containing different nationalities and would indeed prove to be a model. Its success in Czechoslovakia would however really depend on the international situation, since the real reason why Germany was making such difficulties was because she wished to force Czechoslovakia into her orbit.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest, Rome and Paris.

No. 496

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18)*

*No. 353 Telegraphic: by bag [C 7140/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938

Your telegram No. 191,<sup>1</sup> paragraphs 2 to 6.

In accordance with our general policy of avoiding getting drawn into details I have deliberately refrained from asking to see the proposals submitted to the Sudeten Party by Dr. Hodza and I cannot add to the information in regard to them contained in my series of reports including my telegram No. 352.<sup>2</sup> Whether therefore Herr Henlein is justified in his description of them I cannot say, but it is inherently probable that he has as yet been offered nothing which his own followers would allow him to accept. At the same time he would naturally be inclined to make the most of this point in his reports to you at this juncture, when matters are just about to come to a head.

2. The complaints contained in paragraphs 4 and 5 of your telegram appear to me exaggerated. Czech procedure has certainly been disappointingly slow but this should, to my mind, be attributed less to deliberate dilatoriness than to the necessities of the Czech democratic régime. The Government majority is composed of six separate parties, each of which has to be won over before a firm proposal can be laid before the Sudeten Germans. Herr Henlein is perfectly aware of this and for him to call in question Dr. Hodza's good faith on this account is neither fair nor reasonable. While it is not for me to champion Dr. Hodza I would point out that the arguments on which his good faith is here impugned seem to be groundless.

3. The statement that Dr. Hodza had 'flagrantly broken' his promise to come to a proper understanding with the Sudeten Germans before submitting his final draft to Parliament also seems exaggerated. What the promise in fact probably amounted to will be found in paragraph 5 of my telegram

<sup>1</sup> No. 488.

<sup>2</sup> No. 495.



No. 341<sup>3</sup> in which case that promise has not been broken if for no other reason than that no date has yet been fixed for Parliament to meet. I should add however that I have long been somewhat nervous that the Government might not give adequate time for discussion with the Sudeten German party and have on numerous occasions drawn their attention to the importance of the Sudeten Germans being given ample opportunity to negotiate. This point I emphasised during my conversation with Dr. Benes on July 16 (see my telegram No. 352). He and Dr. Hodza have however always made it clear that should agreement prove impossible they will put through their reforms nevertheless. The implications arising out of that issue were discussed in my telegram No. 335.<sup>4</sup>

4. When Herr Henlein speaks of an intention on the part of the Czechs to misrepresent the Sudeten Germans and to deceive the world he is following a regular line of German propaganda which has been taken both by my German colleague and the German press (see paragraph 6 of my telegram 335 and Berlin Savingram No. 272).<sup>5</sup> While the Sudeten Germans are no doubt perfectly genuine and indeed perhaps justified in their belief that the Czechs are adepts in throwing dust in the eyes of the world, at the same time it is not easy to see on what grounds that argument is based in the present connexion. The world will presumably judge the issue in the light of the proposals which will eventually be published by both sides. Naturally both sides will make the best of their case, but it is difficult to follow how the Czech propaganda machine is to prove more effective than the German, unless indeed their case proves the better one.

5. Further comments in regard to the action which may be appropriate follow in my immediately following telegram.<sup>6</sup>

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Budapest.

<sup>3</sup> No. 474.

<sup>4</sup> No. 467.

<sup>5</sup> No. 378.

<sup>6</sup> No. 497.

### No. 497

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18)*

*No. 354 Telegraphic: by bag [C 7141/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

While I am of opinion that strong pressure should continue to be maintained both by my French colleague and myself, I am doubtful whether any further *démarche* on general lines similar to the Anglo-French *démarche* of May 7 would have any great effect on the Czechs. I am confirmed in this view by my audience with Dr. Benes today (see my telegram No. 352).<sup>2</sup> Moreover there is a danger that such a course with its accompanying publicity might make the Sudeten Germans open their mouths still wider and even believe that they could return to their more provocative tactics with impunity. It should not be forgotten that our representations on May 7 were

<sup>1</sup> No. 496.

<sup>2</sup> No. 495.

followed by increased provocation on the Sudeten German side culminating in the crisis of May 21.

2. I am inclined to think that the time has now come when we should consider offering advice of a more concrete nature. As to that I observe from your despatch No. 368<sup>3</sup> that the French have already suggested that they and His Majesty's Government should work out some proposals of the kind. If this can be done, well and good, but I foresee difficulties. I very much doubt whether any useful proposals would emerge except after detailed study on the spot. The question of the administration of this country is a highly complicated matter with its roots in history, and is unlikely to be solved by random proposals from anyone unacquainted with the technicalities. There is the danger too that the Governments sponsoring such proposals would find themselves forced into backing them against serious and perfectly justified opposition from one side or the other.

3. The British idea of sending out a mediator or investigator seems to offer a more profitable line of approach. (Incidentally I would place the emphasis on investigation rather than on mediation, as the likelihood of bringing the two parties to agreement is not great.) But after my audience with Dr. Benes today I feel very doubtful whether he would accept mediation or investigation if offered privately, as he evidently feels that his Government can go no further without compromising the independence and integrity of the country. It would of course be far more difficult for him to refuse if the offer were made publicly as suggested in paragraph 9 of your telegram.<sup>4</sup> While it might be fair to warn him that this was coming, I hope the warning will not be conveyed in such terms as to prejudice the issue as to which side is responsible for the breakdown.

4. From the local point of view the best moment at which the offer should be made would seem to be so soon as the Sudeten Germans have commented on the Czech proposals submitted to them when I fear the improbability of agreement will be clearly revealed. On the other hand, I realise that there may be broader considerations which may make earlier action desirable, for example, in order to forestall a *coup de force* by the Germans or their assumption of an attitude which would impede our further intervention.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest.

<sup>3</sup> This despatch enclosed Sir A. Cadogan's record of the conversation with the French Ambassador printed in No. 479.

<sup>4</sup> No. 488.

#### No. 498

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax*  
*No. 355 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7142/4786/16]*

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938, 8.20 p.m.

I have just received a message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the effect that the Deutsche Nachrichten Bureau issued a statement this afternoon

that a renewed Czechoslovak mobilization was taking place between Troppau and Trautenau.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wished me to know that the report was devoid of all foundation. Not even a military exercise was in progress.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome, Warsaw, Budapest, Belgrade and Bucharest.

Repeated to Paris by Foreign Office.

**No. 499**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 16, 8.25 p.m.)*

*No. 356 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7143/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

I am sending an observer to the spot.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Budapest, Belgrade and Bucharest.

<sup>1</sup> No. 498.

**No. 500**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18<sup>1</sup>)*

*No. 357 Telegraphic: by bag [C 7144/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938

My telegram No. 346,<sup>1</sup> paragraph 2.

I told the President on July 16 of the anxieties expressed to me by my German colleague in regard to the Language Law. I said that I personally, and I believed others also, had considerable sympathy with this point of view. In expressing his own agreement with my representations the President said that the Language Law would grant equality in principle, while maintaining certain limitations unavoidable in practice.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 486.

**No. 501**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18)*

*No. 358 Telegraphic: by bag [C 7145/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 16, 1938

Berlin telegram No. 330 Saving,<sup>1</sup> last sentence.

The order given in view of the Sudeten negotiations to the German army to hold itself in readiness for all eventualities is of such importance that the question arises whether a warning should not be conveyed to the Czechoslovak Government either by myself or through some other channel. I

<sup>1</sup> No. 487.

hesitate, however, to take such action without instructions in case the Czechoslovak Government should in consequence take measures which would be regarded on the German side as provocative and lead directly to the very situation it is our desire to avoid.

2. If the Reich desires to make trouble, it may very shortly find opportunity when the Nationality Statute and the three-year conscription bill are submitted to Parliament. Should Parliament meet and deal with these two matters before the further reservists are called to the colours on July 25 (my telegram No. 349)<sup>2</sup> the temptation to the Reich might be increased. It seems, however, more probable that Parliament will not be summoned until after that date.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> No. 491.

### No. 502

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 17)*

*No. 473 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7155/1941/18]*

PARIS, July 16, 1938

I had a long conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning for the first time after my return from London.<sup>1</sup>

M. Bonnet said that he had sent to the French Ambassador in London his reply to the memorandum regarding Czechoslovakia which you had handed to M. Corbin on July 7.<sup>2</sup> He remarked that he had since summoned to Paris M. de Lacroix, the French Minister at Prague, and General Faucher, Head of the French Military Mission in Czechoslovakia. I here reminded M. Bonnet that, as I had already told him, we had reason to believe that the latter was inclined to encourage the Czechs to be unduly obstinate in their negotiations with the Sudeten Germans, and I urged him to induce General Faucher to change his attitude in this respect. M. Bonnet admitted that the latter was disposed to regard himself as a Czechoslovak General, and promised to talk to him in the sense desired.

In regard to M. de Lacroix M. Bonnet said that he had found him rather surprisingly optimistic, whereas certain French politicians who have just returned from Prague seem very much less so, and consider that Dr. Benes is in a very unyielding mood and that some of the Czechoslovak extremists are dangerously truculent. Having just read Sir Nevile Henderson's telegram No. 305<sup>3</sup> of July 15, I remarked that our information tended to confirm this pessimistic view rather than the relative optimism displayed by M. de Lacroix  
....<sup>4</sup>

M. Bonnet assured me that he would again impress upon M. de Lacroix, who returns to Prague on the morning of July 18, the vital necessity of keeping Dr. Benes up to the mark.

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Phipps was home on leave from July 4-14.

<sup>2</sup> See No. 472.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed. See No. 494, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> A personal reference is here omitted.

His Excellency then told me in strict confidence that Dr. Benes had recently asked him to sound Russia as to the help that that Power would be willing to give Czechoslovakia in the event of war with Germany. I replied that this seemed to me to indicate what a dangerous frame of mind Dr. Benes was in and how desirable it was to speak plainly to him, and M. Bonnet agreed.

In the course of our most friendly conversation I thought it well to remind M. Bonnet of the communication I had made to him on the night of May 22, and in particular to repeat to him the warning I had given him in the sense of your telegram No. 141<sup>5</sup> of May 22, and notably of paragraph 4 thereof. His Excellency assured me that he had not only not forgotten this warning, but had quoted it on occasion.

Repeated to Berlin and Prague.

<sup>5</sup> No. 271.

### No. 503

*Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)*  
*No. 175 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6993/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 17, 1938

Mr. Campbell's telegram No. 467 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

Please express to President of the Council my warm appreciation of his courtesy in sending me the message in regard to his recent speech. I think if I may respectfully say so the words were well chosen. I am looking forward to an opportunity of intimate talk with him and M. Bonnet next week.

<sup>1</sup> No. 481.

### No. 504

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18)*  
*No. 362 Telegraphic: by bag [C 7148/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 17, 1938

My telegram No. 352,<sup>1</sup> paragraphs 4 and 8.

You may care to know that during my audience I also made the following points.

2. In explanation of our attitude in pressing for an early and comprehensive settlement I said that the hope and assumption had of course been that it would be an agreed settlement. This point is, however, I fear likely to be academic in view of the improbability of an agreed settlement being possible.

3. When President Benes said that a plebiscite leading to territorial cessions would mean war I pointed out that it was therefore all the more important to prevent such a demand from arising. A choice had to be made

<sup>1</sup> No. 495.



between various dangers and while the President himself and Dr. Hodza would realise the gravity of the external danger I was afraid that some members of the Cabinet and of the Parliamentary Committee might fail to do so for which reason your warning might, I thought, be helpful and timely. In our own experience I believed that when we had acted generously and quickly as after the South African war the results had on the whole been satisfactory, whereas in the case of Ireland where we had failed to do so we had found it desirable in the light of painful experience to retrieve that failure. Dr. Benes replied that he himself often quoted the Irish example to those who were reluctant to go far enough in the Sudeten question. To me, however, he might point out that the problem was easier for us because there was no powerful neighbour inclined to make trouble over the frontier. I rejoined that Czechoslovakia had therefore all the more reason to seek and find a solution.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

#### No. 505

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18)*

*No. 367 Telegraphic: by bag [C 7153/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 17, 1938

I asked President Benes, July 16, whether there was any truth in a story that the Nationalities Statute was about to be published irrespective of the negotiations with the Sudeten German party. He said the story was not true, so I presume that while no particular decision in the matter may have been taken the position remains as contemplated by Dr. Benes so long ago as June 3 (see my Savingram No. 186).<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram of June 4 Mr. Newton reported that President Benes, in reply to his enquiry, had stated that the Nationalities Statute would not be published until it was introduced to Parliament, which he then hoped would be soon after the last elections on July 12.

#### No. 506

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18, 12.15 p.m.)*

*No. 368 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7197/4786/18]*

PRAGUE, July 18, 1938

My telegram No. 356.<sup>1</sup>

I received the following message from observers from Nachod last night:—  
'We have visited areas of Jicin, Trautenau, Braunau, Nachod. There is no evidence of the presence of troops other than normal garrisons. Frontier posts and fortifications manned on 21st May last are now weakly garrisoned by skeleton formations. Roads are entirely free of road blocks other than

<sup>1</sup> No. 499.

permanent . . .<sup>2</sup> controls. There is no evidence of transport requisitions. We have the best authority for saying that no troops have marched through Braunau, as is apparently stated on the wireless by Deutsches Nachrichten-Büro. The whole area so far visited shows no signs of the kind of activity alleged to be in process. Soldiers of 22nd and 48th Infantry Regiments and of 2nd Mountain Regiment are at present on normal Sunday leave.'<sup>3</sup>

(Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Bucharest, Budapest and Belgrade.)

<sup>2</sup> The text here is uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Newton also reported (July 19, 2.30 p.m.) that he had received the following further report from observers from Freiwaldau: 'We have now visited area of Nachod, Königgrätz, Grulich, Freiwaldau. General conditions here are the same as those described in our first message. We have seen no evidence at all of work on harvest being hindered. We gained admission to first and second line of frontier defences to which we allotted an extensive visit and found only small garrisons and these only in the first line. In general the few troops seen had been in their positions for some weeks and there was no sign of any troop movements of the kind suggested being in progress. We saw no aircraft whatever.'

### No. 507

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 18, 2.10 p.m.)*  
*No. 310 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7200/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 18, 1938

My telegram No. 305<sup>1</sup> paragraph 3.

These rumours are gaining ground and the following pieces of evidence have come to my notice.

1. A German aviator returned from Spain informed a British subject on July 16 that all the best pilots were being quickly recalled from Spain and were being told that they would be required here in August.

2. From a German source I learn that two pilots serving in Spain who belong to the same family have been recently suddenly recalled on the same grounds.

3. British Vice-Consul at Breslau reports that all leave in the air force, even Sunday walking leave, has been stopped till September 1. No air force soldiers are to be seen on the streets.

German members of General Göring's entourage have in conversation with press correspondents alluded to possibility of serious developments at the end of August.

It is noteworthy that these calculated indiscretions all emanate from air force or General Göring's entourage and I am inclined to think they represent a policy of deliberate bluff conceived in response to delays at Prague and in distrust of M. Benes. I remain of opinion that German Government will not risk an unprovoked aggression on Czechoslovakia, at all events unless they feel sure that it will not involve them in a European war.

The danger is that Sudeten may bring about serious incident spontaneously or at the behest of extremists here. In that event Germany would march.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. See No. 494, note 1.

Meanwhile German Government are preparing public opinion for all eventualities. The prominence given to 'News Chronicle' revelations<sup>2</sup> and to M. Cot's article<sup>3</sup> is designed to create the impression that powerful influences are at work in England and France to launch a preventive war. If war should break out, it would be represented here, whatever the circumstances, as a deliberate act of aggression against Germany.<sup>4</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>2</sup> On July 12, the 'News Chronicle' had published what was claimed to be the verbatim report of a secret lecture on German strategic aims in Spain and Portugal by 'one of the most highly placed officers in the German army'. In the French press this officer was named as General von Reichenau.

<sup>3</sup> On July 14 the 'News Chronicle' had published an article by M. Cot, a former Minister for Air in the French Government, forecasting the probable course of war in the air in the hypothetical case of a conflict between the democratic states, France, Great Britain, and Czechoslovakia on the one hand, and the totalitarian powers on the other.

<sup>4</sup> In an earlier telegram of July 18 Sir N. Henderson stated that he had suggested that the Czechoslovak Minister should go to Prague during the coming week to report on the position in Germany.

## No. 508

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*<sup>1</sup>

*No. 25 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7141/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 18, 1938, 10.00 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 353 and 354.<sup>2</sup>

2. It is, I think, clear that the moment has come for some new move to be made. The nervousness in official quarters in Germany, illustrated by the State Secretary's remarks to His Majesty's Ambassador, reported in Berlin telegram No. 306;<sup>3</sup> the rumours that have been put about as regards Czechoslovak mobilisation or troop movements; the anxiety of the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin (see Berlin telegram No. 305);<sup>4</sup> and the very depressing account you gave of President Benes's state of mind in your telegram No. 352,<sup>5</sup> from which it appears that the Czechoslovak Government are determined to give the Sudeten Germans only a very short time in which to comment on the cut-and-dried and indivisible scheme which will be presented to Parliament as a whole and in which only minor amendments will apparently be possible from such submission: all these facts suggest that matters may come to a head within the next few days.

3. I agree with the observation contained in paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 354 about the difficulty of working out concrete proposals and recommending them to the Czechoslovak Government; and although the French

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Newton was informed on the evening of July 18 that this telegram would be brought to him by a special messenger on July 19, and that it would be necessary for him to obtain an interview with Dr. Benes at the earliest possible moment. Mr. Newton was instructed meanwhile 'to do his best to ensure that the Czech Government take no decision likely to precipitate a breach or produce a deadlock between themselves and the Sudeten leaders'.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 496 and 497.

<sup>3</sup> No. 494.

<sup>4</sup> Not printed. See No. 494, note 1.

<sup>5</sup> No. 495.

Government have now once again suggested this course to us, I am clear in my mind that we should be wiser to avoid adopting it if we possibly can.

4. The course that commends itself to me, and I gather from your telegram No. 354 that you are inclined to agree, would be an offer of investigation and mediation.

5. I have come to the conclusion that the time has now come for us to broach this question with President Benes, and I should be glad if you would take an immediate opportunity to do so.

6. You could say that His Majesty's Government have been considering for some time past what useful action they could take in the event of it becoming apparent that a deadlock in the conversations was imminent. It appears to us that this moment is now approaching, owing to the decision of the Czechoslovak Government to ask Parliament to adopt the Nationalities Statute as a whole, without giving the Sudeten Germans adequate time or opportunity for discussion of points of difference.

7. You were quite right in criticising this procedure in your conversation with President Benes. Indeed the procedure seems to me quite indefensible and would certainly shock public opinion here. It would at once precipitate a demand for a plebiscite, even from those elements among the Sudeten who have hitherto been inclined to take a moderate line. Lastly, it would justify past German complaints and give them ground for arguing that an agreed settlement was impossible to achieve owing to the attitude of the Czechoslovak Government. I am not convinced by the President's argument as stated in paragraph 5 of your telegram No. 352 against my proposal that legislation should only be introduced in regard to those subjects on which agreement has been reached. If the Czech Government put before Parliament a body of legislation of which only a few points represent agreement between the parties and of which the remainder is still in dispute, and declare their intention of passing the whole of this legislation over the heads of the Sudeten Germans, is it not evident that the result will be that the two parties will become entrenched in their present positions, so that all possibility of further negotiation will be destroyed? Nor am I impressed by Dr. Benes's argument that although in the past we have pressed for early action we now appear to be urging delay. Although it is true that we have persistently pressed for expedition and despatch, we have as you point out in your telegram No. 362<sup>6</sup> done so on the assumption that this would lead to agreement. It was never in our thought to advocate a form of acceleration which would produce an open breach. Moreover, as you so rightly pointed out, it is obviously unfair that having taken several weeks to make up their own minds the Czech Government are now expecting the Sudeten to make up theirs in a few days.

8. We have therefore come to the conclusion that the most useful contribution His Majesty's Government could make would be to propose an impartial person of standing and repute who should be sent at the right moment to Czechoslovakia for the joint purpose of investigating and media-

<sup>6</sup> No. 504.

tion who would be quite independent of His Majesty's Government or any other Government, and whose function it would be to acquaint himself with the character of the problem and with the causes of disagreement between the two Parties, and endeavour by his advice and influence to maintain contact between the two Parties, or to restore it in the event of a breakdown. It would be essential, of course, that the individual selected should proceed with the assent and if possible at the request of both the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten representatives, and that both sides should undertake to give him all facilities and to explain to him fully their respective points of view and the difficulties that concern them. In order to avoid a head-on collision, His Majesty's Government would strongly urge that no statement should be made by the Czechoslovak Government in a sense suggesting that on points on which agreement has not been reached there was no further room for discussion. Nor for the same reason should Parliament in present circumstances be called upon on a given date to vote the Nationalities legislation as a whole.

9. The person we propose for this task is Lord Runciman, who will need no introduction to President Benes.

10. You should explain to President Benes that you are on this occasion approaching him privately on this subject, and press him strongly to declare himself ready to accept in principle the proposal. If the Czechoslovak Government were to bring themselves to request our help in this matter, this would undoubtedly produce a favourable effect on public opinion here and go a long way to counteract German propaganda, while I should have thought that Dr. Benes himself would have found it easier to take the initiative than to yield to insistence from outside. You should add that if it should subsequently become apparent to His Majesty's Government that a breakdown is impending, with all the dangers for European peace that such a breakdown would involve, His Majesty's Government will not be able to refrain from making public their proposal and the response accorded to it.

11. We do not contemplate any approach to the Sudeten leaders at present on this subject, and should Dr. Benes question you on this point, you should say to him that when the time comes we will find means of putting the proposal to them, but that we see no useful purpose in doing so until we know the reactions of the Czechoslovak Government to your approach. You should make it plain to President Benes that if these reactions are favourable we should use our best efforts with the German Government to press them in their turn to use all their influence to persuade the Sudeten Germans to accept likewise.

12. The ideal course would be for the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten leaders to agree to make a joint announcement to the effect that they had requested His Majesty's Government to nominate some person for the purpose named, and that they welcomed the intimation from His Majesty's Government that in pursuance of this request they had invited Lord Runciman to act.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Budapest and Warsaw.



*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 19)*

*No. 341 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7255/65/18]*

BERLIN, July 18, 1938

The evening press contains the first announcement of a new law, signed on July 13, which is described as a 'Law regarding services for military purposes'.

The fundamental principle is stated to be that all inhabitants of German territory, including juridical persons, are liable to material contribution for military purposes. Requisitioning centres are to be set up which will be empowered to demand the use of objects in private ownership or safekeeping, rights to movable objects (not however to real property), and the exercise of various other rights. It is indicated that these rights will extend to every form of commandeering for troops on the march, aeroplanes forced down, etc. Save for services which may reasonably be demanded free, the requisitioning centre is to give compensation.

The officially inspired commentary which accompanies the short preliminary announcement of the law lays stress upon its rational derivation from the principle of the 'community before the individual'. The same concern is perceptible to make this measure seem a normal development as in the case of the recent labour service law (see my telegram No. 295 Saving).<sup>1</sup>

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram gave the official communiqué on the 'decree for ensuring the labour requirements for undertakings of special national importance' of June 22.

## No. 510

*Record of a conversation between Viscount Halifax and Captain Wiedemann,<sup>1</sup>*

*on July 18, 1938*

*[C 7344/7262/18]*

Captain Wiedemann called at my house by arrangement at 10 o'clock this morning, and I had two hours' conversation with him. Sir Alexander Cadogan was also present.

<sup>1</sup> This conversation took place on July 18 in London. The visit of Captain Wiedemann, a confidant of Herr Hitler, was made on German initiative. On hearing of Captain Wiedemann's intention to come to England, and of the fact that Herr Hitler wished to entrust him with a special mission of 'exploration', Lord Halifax, with the approval of the Prime Minister, agreed to see Captain Wiedemann at his private house. Captain Wiedemann was recognized by a press correspondent on his arrival in England, and an inaccurate account of his visit to Lord Halifax appeared in the British press. In a speech to the House of Lords on July 27 Lord Halifax, referring to Captain Wiedemann's visit, said that 'the effect of our conversation was to show that, however much we differed on some matters of internal interest to both countries, it was evident that both nations were anxious to lose no opportunity of establishing better relations' with each other. *Parl. Deb.*, 5th Ser., H. of L., vol. 110, col. 1284.

Captain Wiedemann confirmed that he had come with Herr Hitler's knowledge, and that his mission was to explore the possibility of some important German personage coming over here in the near future, with the idea of full discussion of Anglo-German relations. He indicated that the personage contemplated was Field-Marshal Göring.

I said that His Majesty's Government would sincerely welcome any procedure that gave prospect of improving relations between the two countries, though the moment for such discussion must obviously be chosen with great care. Any visit of the kind indicated would inevitably attract public attention, and if there were no concrete result it might do more harm than good.

Captain Wiedemann said that he ought perhaps to say a word in general in regard to Herr Hitler's attitude towards England. That had always been one of admiration and friendship, but Herr Hitler felt that he had on various occasions been rebuffed, or at any rate that his advances had not been well received. He cited two instances: in the first place there had been some disappointment at our failure to produce any concrete proposals at the time of my visit to Berlin last November. Before that visit the German Government had understood from His Majesty's Ambassador that I should be coming with definite proposals, and when it became clear that this was not so Herr Hitler had experienced a degree of disappointment. In the second place Herr Hitler felt that he had made a great effort in negotiating the Naval Treaty with Great Britain: in that Treaty he had definitely acknowledged British naval superiority, but there seemed little appreciation in this country of the effort which he had made. He had, moreover, been resentful of the credence given in England to rumours on May 21 of German troop movements.

I interjected that there had of course been rumours and counter-rumours at the time; but that in justice to the attitude His Majesty's Government had felt bound to adopt, I thought I might point out that the denials of troop movements would have had great weight if similar denials at the time of Austria had not proved mistaken.

Captain Wiedemann admitted that von Ribbentrop had been badly informed and had not managed that business well.

Nevertheless, Herr Hitler was still inspired with the desire to be friends with England, and was still prepared to make an effort to that end.

I said that His Majesty's Government would welcome anything that gave hopes of leading to better relations between the two countries, but I must warn Captain Wiedemann that the present moment might not be altogether favourable. It was impossible to deny that the existing tension caused by the Czechoslovak problem would militate against the restoration of complete confidence, which was essential to success. If that problem had received a peaceful and satisfactory solution evidently that might afford a good opportunity for attempting a settlement of many other questions. Perhaps even if a solution had not actually been reached, the situation might be rendered more favourable if the German Government could give some assurance of their resolve to assist in a peaceful settlement of the question and to refrain

from any form of direct action or use of force. Did Captain Wiedemann think it would be possible for his Government to give any such assurance or to make any such pronouncement? As he well knew, any precipitate action might involve a conflict in which the French would be bound to honour their obligations and into which it was impossible, as pointed out by the Prime Minister, for His Majesty's Government to be sure they would not be drawn.

Captain Wiedemann said that he was not himself charged with a political mission on this occasion, and was hardly in a position to discuss such a question. He could, however, give me the most binding assurance—in fact, he was authorised to do so—that in present circumstances the German Government were planning no kind of forcible action, and so far as one could see into the future, had no intention of resorting to such methods. His Government might be able to give an assurance of the kind suggested limited to a definite period. He doubted whether they could give it for all time. There were long delays in the settlement of the Czechoslovak crisis, and as long as that state of suspense continued, there might at any moment occur incidents which a great State like Germany would be unable to overlook. If a number of the Sudeten Deutsch were massacred it was impossible to say that the German Government would not feel called upon to intervene.

I asked Captain Wiedemann whether the exchange of views now contemplated was to be regarded as a continuation of the conversations which I had had in Berlin, and which had been continued early this year through His Majesty's Ambassador.

Captain Wiedemann gave no direct answer to this question but he indicated that the aim of his Government would be to obtain a comprehensive agreement. He thought that his Government would wish to discuss all outstanding questions, and he hoped that through friendly negotiations a satisfactory settlement might be reached. He said that in the past Germany had on various occasions put forward claims which the German Government considered to be moderate: these had on nearly all occasions been rejected, and the result had been that in the end Germany had taken more than she had originally demanded. As an instance he quoted the fact that in 1933 Herr Hitler had discussed with him the question of the Reichswehr and had said that he would ask for the numbers to be raised to 300,000, though he indicated to Captain Wiedemann that he would be prepared to accept 200,000. This demand had been rejected, and the result was that Germany had introduced universal military service.

I again put it to Captain Wiedemann that the prospect of any conversations would be greatly enhanced if the German Government could see their way to declare in some form that they were resolved in co-operation with us to seek a peaceful and satisfactory settlement of the Czechoslovak question.

I asked Captain Wiedemann what procedure he thought Herr Hitler would favour if and when the negotiations failed. Captain Wiedemann answered very readily that in such an event the German Government would wish to get the negotiations resumed in whatever way this could best be

managed. I then asked whether I was right in thinking that the German Government had not regretted the fact that we had been endeavouring in Prague to assist in the discovery of a peaceful solution.

Captain Wiedemann replied that Herr Hitler recognised that we had made an effort, but regretted that we had not been able to do yet more. With regard to the suggestion that the German Government should make some such declaration as I indicated, he again repeated most emphatically that the German Government was planning no resort to force. If matters continued on the present basis there was no idea of Germany adopting such a line: she might only be forced into taking it by some unforeseen and serious incident. He recurred to the undue delay, which might be misunderstood in Germany. He instanced the grant by His Majesty's Government of autonomy to Ireland, and the acceptance by the French Government of the Saar plebiscite and he asked why the Czechoslovak Government could not follow those examples. I had to point out that the examples he had quoted were not quite on the same footing as the problem with which we were now confronted. Further, I observed that this problem was one that had presented continual difficulty now for several centuries, and it could never be easy of solution. It was therefore surely unreasonable to expect that it could be satisfactorily solved in a few weeks or months.

In regard to procedure, I enquired of Captain Wiedemann whether he thought his Government would agree that any further discussion of these arrangements should be continued through official channels.

Captain Wiedemann agreed, but he said that in order that there should be no misunderstanding, he must explain the situation. He said that Field-Marshal Göring was strongly in favour of the idea. The Field-Marshal was very anxious to see agreement between Great Britain and Germany, and to settle amicably all questions that might be at issue between the two countries, and believed that this could be done by friendly negotiation. Herr Hitler was not against the project, but both recognised the need for preparation and to ascertain our reactions before committing himself to a definite and final opinion. Herr von Ribbentrop at present knew nothing about it. In the circumstances he suggested that the channel of communication for further exchange of views would be either through Herr von Dirksen, whom he would take into his confidence, to Captain Wiedemann himself, or through Sir Neville Henderson to Herr von Neurath.

I enquired whether any difficulty would be caused by negotiating with Herr von Neurath behind the back, as it were, of Herr von Ribbentrop, and I asked whether Herr von Ribbentrop would not now be brought into the matter. Captain Wiedemann said quite emphatically that Herr von Ribbentrop would not be apprised of the matter until that became absolutely unavoidable. He added in confidence that Herr von Ribbentrop's position with the Führer was no longer what it had been.

I also raised the question of the form in which any announcement of a visit to London might be made. I presumed that it might be said that the German Government had desired that such a visit should take place, and

that His Majesty's Government had indicated their assent, and had invited Field-Marshal Göring. Captain Wiedemann referred to the fact that I myself on leaving Berlin had said that I hoped that we should see Field-Marshal Göring in London, and he thought it better to take that as a starting point; and to say that His Majesty's Government had now issued the invitation which Field-Marshal Göring gladly accepted.

I did not pursue this subject further, and we agreed that that was really a matter that could be considered later on, when we agreed on the principle of the visit. I told Captain Wiedemann that I should feel obliged to tell the French Government that we had received certain approaches from the German Government, with the purpose of exploring the possibilities of conversations at a later date, and that if and when this matured, we should of course keep them informed. He at once said that there could of course be no possible objection: that would be quite understood. I also told him that in view of the report of his arrival in the 'Daily Express', I should probably have to tell the French that I had seen him. This also he readily accepted.

I also asked him about what time Herr Hitler or Field-Marshal Göring would have in mind for the visit if it took place to which he replied that he supposed it might not be possible before the autumn.

I, at this point, thought it well to read to Captain Wiedemann the message which I had originally drafted with the idea that it might be sent through His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin. I subsequently gave instructions for the text of this message to be sent to Captain Wiedemann and he should have received it by luncheon time.

I then summed up the upshot of our conversation and this summing up was repeated by Captain Wiedemann himself. It was to the effect that the idea of an exchange of views and a visit of the nature indicated was welcomed in principle by His Majesty's Government. But it was agreed that it would be important to prepare the ground carefully and to try to ensure a favourable atmosphere. At present the chief obstacle consisted in the state of tension produced by the continued crisis over Czechoslovakia and His Majesty's Government hoped that a peaceful and satisfactory settlement of that question might open the way to a fruitful exchange of views.

Before taking leave of him I had some private conversation with Captain Wiedemann, and it may be of interest to note one or two points that emerged from it. I asked him whether he had enjoyed Herr Hitler's friendship for a long time; I understood that he had been with him in the War. Captain Wiedemann said that he had served with Herr Hitler for two and a half years during the War; during that time he himself was Regimental Adjutant and Herr Hitler was what he described as 'despatch bearer'. Captain Wiedemann added that his friends had often asked him whether, in those days, he had detected the great qualities that Herr Hitler possessed and whether he had had any inkling of the future that was in store for him, and he had always been bound to tell his friends that he had not noticed anything of the kind. Herr Hitler had been a brave, reliable and cool soldier, the sort of man on whom one could rely and whom one was glad to have in reserve to



put into any post of difficulty or danger. But he had had no idea of the capabilities [of] which Herr Hitler had subsequently given proof. Captain Wiedemann added that he did not enter the party or Herr Hitler's service until 1934; after the War and until that date he had been farming in Germany.

Captain Wiedemann told me that he would return to Germany either this evening or tomorrow morning and he assured me that he would lose no time in giving Herr Hitler an account of our conversation. He would also report to Herr von Neurath and possibly to certain other officials, and before he left London he would inform the German Ambassador of what had passed.

A copy of the written communication to Captain Wiedemann is annexed.

H.

18 July, 1938.

No. 511

*Letter from Sir A. Cadogan to Captain Wiedemann*

[C 7344/7262/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 18, 1938

Dear Captain Wiedemann,

The following is the text of the message which Lord Halifax read to you this morning:—

'On the other hand' it might defeat the purpose we both have in view to embark on conversations that, even on a non-official basis, were bound, if they became public, to attract much attention unless we could both feel reasonably sure that such conversations were likely to lead to good result.

'It is obvious that if normal relations had been re-established between the German and Czechoslovak Governments, such conversations would be held under the most favourable circumstances. Short of the realisation of the above conditions, it would, however, be the opinion of His Majesty's Government that an undertaking given to each other by both Governments to co-operate in promoting the achievement of a peaceful settlement in Czechoslovakia would be valuable and would offer better prospect of successful issue to any conversations than might otherwise be expected in the state of uncertainty which necessarily at present prevails.

'His Majesty's Government would welcome the views of the German Government upon these observations, and if thereafter it should be decided to pursue the suggestion of direct conversations on matters of interest to both countries, His Majesty's Government would welcome the decision. In that event, it would doubtless be convenient that the suggestion should at the appropriate moment be confidentially conveyed through the official channels.

<sup>1</sup> It would appear, from these words and from paragraph 4, that this message, as originally drafted, contained a preliminary paragraph or paragraphs which were not included in the final version. It has not been possible to trace in the Foreign Office archives any text of the message other than that printed above.

'His Majesty's Government would anticipate that it might be impossible to keep any such visit, especially if it were of an important personage, secret, and it would perhaps be right to add that His Majesty's Government could not guarantee that there might not be some outward manifestation in the Press or elsewhere of the hostility of certain sections here to the political ideas of the German Government, and to some of their actions. They would, of course, do their best to induce moderation in the Press and to see that any other activities were strictly restrained.'

With kind regards, and with best wishes to you for your journey.

Yours sincerely,

ALEXANDER CADOGAN.

No. 512

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *July 18, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

I do not like the atmosphere here. It has greatly deteriorated during the week that I was away. Krofta's first speech did much of the damage and the 'News Chronicle's' campaign has done a great deal of harm also. The Germans are convinced that Benes is merely throwing dust in our eyes and that he believes that Germany won't dare take action. If Benes does believe that, he is liable to find himself gravely mistaken.

Perhaps the worst is that the Germans are losing or have lost faith in the efficacy of our intervention. If the Czech Government gets its Parliament to put through a Nationality Law, regardless of Sudeten agreement, there is bound to be trouble. If, on the top of it, they pass a 3 years' Military Service law it will be worse. Prevention is better than cure and I honestly believe that the moment has come for Prague to get a real twist of the screw. And something that the Czech nation as a whole will appreciate. It is the French job, but if they won't face it I believe that we shall have to.

People will argue that something must be done at Berlin also. Yes, but it must be remembered that Berlin got its jolt on May 21 and that this time it is Prague's turn. If we are to do any good here, we must be able to show that we have been in deadly earnest at Prague.

I do not feel that we can afford to wait much longer and I do feel that your Paris visit should be the turning point. If Benes cannot satisfy Henlein, he can satisfy no Sudeten leader. I wish we had our independent mediator already on the spot. We did not begin our intervention at Prague to be agreeable to the Czechs but to help them out of an intolerable situation and to save Europe from a foolish war. Much as we may hate doing it, we have got to be disagreeable to the Czechs—in their own interests as well as ours.

Yours very sincerely,

NEVILLE HENDERSON.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, July 18, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

I notice in paragraph 5 of Newton's telegram No. 346<sup>1</sup> that he reports the German Minister at Prague as attaching, with reference to my last interview with Ribbentrop, 'great importance to prospect which *in your opinion* it seemed to indicate of negotiating some general settlement *satisfactory to Germany*, if only Czechoslovak question could be got out of the way'.<sup>2</sup>

This is a garbled and not quite accurate version. Both Ribbentrop, whom I saw just before I left for London a fortnight ago, and Göring when I went to Karinhall on June 22 spent most of an afternoon arguing the necessity and desirability of a good understanding with Great Britain. With both of them I took the same line that while I did not believe there would ever be any peace and quiet in the world till our two countries did come to some understanding which would be satisfactory to both of us and not only to Germany, the moment to discuss it had not yet come. Everything in my opinion depended on the solution this year of the Spanish and Czechoslovak questions, and particularly the latter. If Germany was prepared to exercise restraint and to co-operate with us in finding a pacific settlement of the Sudeten problem, your hands and those of the Prime Minister would be greatly strengthened in the pursuance of a policy of rapprochement with Germany which, in my opinion, you both still desired. If, on the other hand, Germany were to resort to force again, I believed that the last chance of an understanding would vanish.

As a matter of fact I have taken this line consistently during past two months and I fancy that it has given the Germans more cause to reflect than anything else. But I have never gone so far as to involve your responsibility. If you wished to authorise me to speak officially at any time or at my discretion in this sense, it might, however, be useful; or alternatively to speak so yourself to von Dirksen.

May your visit to Paris have the best possible result. Personally I regard the closeness of Anglo-French relations as just as inevitable and final as I do the ties between England and Belgium. Neither more nor less. Yet much would be gained if the Royal visit could convince the French nation of that fact and thereby enable it to view Germany with less fear and jealousy. I do not understand Daladier's view that French advances to Germany might be regarded with suspicion in England, unless it be because the French for their part view our advances to Germany with suspicion. In my opinion it

<sup>1</sup> No. 486.

<sup>2</sup> The wording of the sentence in question as received by the Foreign Office was as follows: '... great importance to prospect which it seemed to indicate of negotiating some general settlement satisfactory to Germans if only Czech question could be got out of the way.'

would be marvellous if the French were to come to an understanding with Germany and I should be quite indifferent whether they did so before we did.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 514

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Sir O. Sargent*

[C 7403/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, July 18, 1938

Your letter of July 16.<sup>1</sup>

What exactly do you mean by 'we do not really help ourselves if we allow the Germans to get away with statements' such as those reported in my telegrams Nos. 294<sup>2</sup> and 295?<sup>3</sup>

In the first I reported that Weizsäcker 'insisted that German Government had no real authority over the Sudeten leaders and even if they had the latter had little over their own followers'.

I cannot prevent the German officials from making such statements and you seem to have discovered the moon when you add that 'we find it hard to credit such statements'. Do you imagine that I do or that I sit meekly by and accept all the Germans say to me at its face value? If you do, you are gravely mistaken.

The very fact that I telegraphed that Weizsäcker 'insisted' should have been quite enough, apart from the 'even if they had', to indicate to you that the proverbial grain of salt had been very much in evidence. I shall be obliged if you will reassure the Secretary of State on this point.

Obviously Ribbentrop's and Weizsäcker's disclaimers are ominous and it is for that reason I reported them to you. It is the very fact that I keep on urging them to use their undoubted influence with the Sudeten for good and not evil that induces them to resort to the attitude which they adopt: namely that the German Government is not giving detailed advice to Henlein and is not responsible. That is now their stereotyped reply as you will see from

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this letter Sir O. Sargent commented on the statements by Herr von Weizsäcker and Herr von Ribbentrop reported in Nos. 464 and 469. Sir O. Sargent wrote 'We do not really help ourselves if we allow the Germans to get away with these statements, which we find hard to credit. Our best chance of helping all concerned to a peaceful settlement is to leave the Germans in no doubt that we know about their influence with the Sudeten Germans, and that we count upon them to turn it to good and not to evil ends. The Sudeten party is, we understand, very largely financed from Berlin, and the German Government are obviously in a position to control its activities. These disclosures from Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker are therefore ominous and might easily become even more so.'

As regards Weizsäcker's suggestion that even if the German Government had authority over the Sudeten leaders . . . the latter had little control over their own followers, there is in our view little danger that the Sudeten Germans will do anything violent unless they are either stimulated or encouraged from headquarters over the border.

The Secretary of State will be glad if you will take any opportunity that may arise to make it clear to the Germans that we must take statements such as those quoted above with more than the proverbial grain of salt.'

<sup>2</sup> No. 464.

<sup>3</sup> No. 469.

the last paragraph of Newton's telegram No. 346<sup>4</sup> where the German Minister in Prague used the same argument as Ribbentrop.

I only hope that you may not find yourself seriously mistaken in your view that there is little danger of the Sudeten doing anything violent unless encouraged from headquarters over the border. To believe so is, in my opinion, sadly to ignore the psychology not only of the Sudeten but of youth generally. In my mind that is a constant preoccupation. Extremists, even on this side of the border, do not listen always to headquarters. Cast your mind back to Northern Ireland in 1913 and 1914 and you will appreciate the risks. If headquarters had wished for an incident, it would have occurred before now. If headquarters wish it to occur in August it will occur then, for it is only headquarters which is the restraining force. But this does not mean to say that without concurrence from headquarters there can be no incident. I was talking about six weeks ago to two very anti-Nazi Germans who were educated prewar at Prague University. Both were terrified of war and both regarded as the chief danger the Sudeten youth, whom they feared were quite capable of marching unarmed against armed soldiery and getting shot in order to force intervention by Germany.

No, I disagree utterly with you in that respect and with Newton so far as that goes in the comment he makes in paragraph 1 of his telegram No. 280 Saving.<sup>5</sup> So far Henlein has maintained fair discipline, though the Czech police have had to put up with a great deal of provocation. But it does not necessarily follow that Weizsäcker (who would probably deplore an incident as much as I should) is wrong when he fears that the Sudeten rank and file may one day get out of their leaders' control. If it had not been for Hitler's support of Henlein would they have remained until now under it? I doubt it, for though Newton's arguments in his second paragraph undoubtedly apply to the older and more responsible Sudeten, they are not, in my opinion, applicable to the Sudeten youth who don't want to see their demands met but only want incorporation in the Reich.

I am sending a copy of your letter and of this reply to Newton so as to give him an opportunity, if he has time to do so, of disagreeing with my anxieties on this score. I should certainly feel happier if I were not afraid, as in Austria, of the irresponsible hot-headedness of youth.

Yours

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>4</sup> No. 486.

<sup>5</sup> No. 471.

### No. 515

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 22)*

*No. 257 E [C 7363/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 19, 1938

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that an unfortunate result of the recent political tension between Czechs and Germans has been a disinclination of



either side to have any dealings with the other, which in economic matters has reached the proportion of a mutual boycott. Accusations of a deliberate boycott are made on both sides, but it is probable that although there is a certain amount of incitement by mischievous persons the movement is largely spontaneous. As an illustration, the 'Rundschau' of 16 July had a long article accusing Czechs of fomenting a boycott by means of leaflets, chain letters, and so forth, and on another page printed, unconscious of inconsistency, an advertisement urging German money to be deposited in German banks.

2. If a judgment is to be passed in the matter, it may be said that the greater weight of blame attaches to the Germans, whose campaign has been more organised with party backing, but that they have been the chief sufferers. The industries chiefly hit have been the food industries, i.e., macaroni, soup cubes, &c., which are a typical Sudeten industry, the textile industry, and the German health resorts. I hope shortly to obtain figures throwing light on the quantitative extent to which these industries have suffered. As an example on which information is available, the spa of Franzensbad has had a drop in receipts from 42 million crowns in 1937 to 18 million, the maximum estimate for 1938.

3. It is to be supposed that the loss to the food industry is the result of spontaneous disinclination on the part of Czechs to buy German products, though this natural feeling has been assisted by conscious endeavour. A member of my staff was shown a carefully prepared (though not necessarily accurate) list of household products, with their makers' names and political sympathies added, showing what a radically conscious Czech householder might buy without enriching the party whose aim was the disruption of his State. It was said that this leaflet had a wide secret circulation. The Germans are prone to bring up in connexion with this industry what they regard as the first and the most crass instance of a deliberate and official boycott, namely the quota system for Government orders for margarine. The contention is that Schicht's of Aussig is the only margarine factory of importance, and that the quota system was devised for depriving it of its proper quota, which should have been in the neighbourhood of 100 per cent. This is an old story, and unconnected with the present strained position.

4. As regards the textile industry the president of the textile manufacturers recently stated in a speech that the position is so serious that it may lead shortly to the dismissal of workers. Baron Liebig's prophecies are apt to be on the gloomy side, but in the present instance there is no need to suppose he was greatly over-stating. The situation in this industry is complex. On the one hand many of the Prague dealers are Jews, who have been alarmed and enraged with the anti-Semitic implications of recent Sudeten policy, and by the attempts of the party to boycott their co-religionists in the German areas. Their refusal to buy from the Sudeten areas follows as a consequence. On the other hand, a large Prague dealer explained that the present abstention from buying was connected with a technical trade dispute, and was intended as a measure of strike tactics to gain the purely commercial issue against the

manufacturers. This shows that an improvement in the situation may perhaps be hoped for shortly.

5. The abstention of Czechs from Sudeten health resorts is completely understandable as a spontaneous manifestation. Their holiday would be spoilt by the Nazi atmosphere, and by anxiety at the possibility of being concerned in some unpleasant incident. Moreover, I have reason to believe that in this case also private intervention contributes. I heard of the case of a Czech general who was threatened with a press campaign if he stayed at a certain hotel at Karlsbad. The threat was said to come from a prominent Czech industrialist, whose name my informant did not wish to disclose.

6. The boycott on the part of the Germans is directed against the Czech and Jewish retailers in the German areas. It has the backing of the party and the press. Its direct economic consequences, except to the persons immediately affected, are negligible; its indirect consequences are far more serious for its promoters, as the foregoing paragraphs make clear. In conjunction with the unsettled political conditions it is stimulating the tendency of industry to migrate from the Sudeten areas to the Czech parts of the country. One aspect of this was illustrated by the sale last week of an important group of coal mines situated in the German area by the German-Jewish Petschek family to a Czech banking concern. The Sudeten Germans fear that one result of this change will be a decrease of Sudeten labour employed in the mines.

7. Generally speaking, the situation presents itself to my mind as having arisen without conscious malevolence out of the mental strains of unnerved people, direct evil intentions playing a less important part. Unfortunately, the Czech authorities who have had the matter fully brought to their attention by well-informed persons, seem powerless or insufficiently anxious to mend matters, and their semi-official spokesmen appear to confine themselves to recriminations against the Germans.

8. I am sending a copy of this despatch to the Department of Overseas Trade.

I have, &c.

(For the Minister),

D. SCOTT-FOX

#### No. 516

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*

*No. 197 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7743/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 19, 1938, 6.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 374.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning is that if President Benes should reject the suggestion which you are now making privately to him, or should fail to give an affirmative

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. In this telegram (telephoned at 4.45 p.m. on July 19) Mr. Newton asked whether, in paragraph 10 of telegram No. 25 Saving (No. 508) the meaning of the last words was 'the response accorded to an eventual public proposal' or 'the response already accorded' to the 'earlier private approach' which Mr. Newton hoped to make on July 20.

response, His Majesty's Government may be constrained, if it should subsequently become apparent to them that a breakdown is impending, to make public the nature of this suggestion and of the response which President Benes has made to it.

Repeated to Paris, Berlin, Warsaw and Budapest.

**No. 517**

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) (Received July 20, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 315 Telegraphic [C 7261/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 20, 1938, 1.0 a.m.

My telegram No. 306.<sup>1</sup>

State Secretary asked me to call on him late this evening<sup>2</sup> in order to discuss with him detailed report which he had received in regard to negotiations between Czechoslovak Government and Sudeten party. He said that gist of it would be telegraphed to German Ambassador at London.

According to the State Secretary position was that out of the eight points of Henlein's Carlsbad speech one, two, three, six and eight had been completely ignored by Czechoslovak Government while offers in regard to four, five and seven were wholly inadequate. I pointed out objections to six and eight. State Secretary admitted difficulties in respect of them and said that these might have been overcome if generosity had been shown as regards the others. This was unfortunately not the case. It was, he said, quite obvious that Czechoslovak Government had no intention of abandoning National State in favour of State of Nationalities. If that was so there could not possibly be any agreed settlement. State Secretary told me that he regarded the situation as very serious. Hitherto German Government had kept as much in the background as possible. Neither in the press nor in public speeches had any specific conditions for Sudeten been demanded. They had not insisted on a plebiscite or territorial autonomy or this, that or the other definite concession. They had purposely refrained from doing so partly in order not to handicap us, as I had told him that it would (this is true), and partly in order that there should be no point in which German prestige would be involved if it were not adopted. He gave me to understand that this attitude could not be maintained any longer. Goodwill in Prague was conspicuous by its absence and Germany could not advise Sudetens to accept any solution which did not give Sudeten areas some measure of home rule.

I asked the State Secretary whether German Government really wished Sudetens to come to an agreed solution. He replied categorically 'of course'. I told him that while I had been convinced that this was so in May I did not feel so certain that it was still the case. He assured me that it still was and would not admit that Germany sought any issue but a pacific one.

I told State Secretary that German Government must continue to have

<sup>1</sup> No. 494.

<sup>2</sup> This telegram was drafted on July 19.

confidence in the determination of His Majesty's Government to secure settlement which would be fair to both sides and warned him earnestly against loss of patience and precipitate action. He took these admonitions in good part while regarding the position as hopeless unless decisive pressure was brought to bear at Prague.

After reading Mr. Newton's telegram No. 352<sup>3</sup> I confess that I regard the prospect of a solution on lines proposed by M. Benes as quite out of the question.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>3</sup> No. 495.

### No. 518

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 20, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 314 Telegraphic [C 7264/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 20, 1938, 1.10 a.m.

I asked Italian Ambassador today<sup>1</sup> whether he believed that German Government really wished for and would be ready to accept agreed settlement between Czechoslovakia and Sudeten Germans. He told me that in his opinion Herr Hitler did so provided concessions to Sudeten Germans were really substantial. This is the view which I have up till now always held. It was certainly true in May when our intervention at Prague began. If M. Benes had been able to make big gesture at that time the situation would at once have been eased. Though I am more doubtful today I believe it still to be true: but concessions will need to be more substantial than two months ago. What exactly 'substantial' means is a matter of opinion. Nevertheless I believe Herr Hitler himself would not be entirely unreasonable if Czech goodwill was obvious and equivocal.<sup>2</sup> Taking all M. Benes's difficulties for granted, I fear he has nevertheless gravely compromised prospects of success by delays, however inevitable they may have been, which have given the impression just the reverse of unequivocal goodwill. It may not be too late but I would regard this as the last opportunity.

There cannot possibly be any permanence in anything but an agreed solution. Minister for Foreign Affairs was right when he said this to me a fortnight ago and I have no doubt but that he was echoing a view of Herr Hitler. If there can be no agreed solution it would be better to accept principle of plebiscite now rather than allow the sore to fester indefinitely in the heart of Europe. If war ensued today I should be confident of success in spite of Germany's terrific military and air force but it would bring no solution except partial dismemberment of Czechoslovakia itself. Even if war were averted nothing short of a readily agreed solution will prevent agitation from going on in Sudeten areas. Moreover it will no longer be on the basis of autonomy within Czechoslovakia but on that of self-determination with

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on July 19.

<sup>2</sup> This should probably read 'unequivocal'.

right of incorporation in the Reich. It will be impossible to resist this demand for long.

It is not by tinkering with laws or by grudging concessions that an agreed solution can possibly be attained. I do not believe M. Benes will ever overcome his opposition, the military or extremist parties, unless he can point to compelling advice of Great Britain and France and I am personally convinced that it is our duty in the interest of Czechoslovakia as well as of Europe to insist that we can regard no scheme as comprehensive that is not based on a form of federalism.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

## No. 519

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 20, 3.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 317 Telegraphic [C 7269/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 20, 1938, 1.59 p.m.

Mr. Newton's telegram No. 358.<sup>1</sup>

I should deprecate giving any warning not only for reason given in second sentence but also because statement that order has been given is only assumption on my part based on common sense and extreme probability. Czechoslovak Government are probably already aware that German military forces are prepared for all eventualities and if we warn them of the fact they are likely to shoulder us before the world with responsibility for any counter measures they may take.

You will remember that it was alleged in Prague that mobilisation of last May was ordered in consequence of warning from British Secret Service.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

<sup>1</sup> No. 501.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Newton telegraphed on July 23 that he agreed with Sir N. Henderson's view.

## No. 520

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*  
*No. 290 Telegraphic [C 7354/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 20, 1938, 6.00 p.m.

1. The German Ambassador read to Sir A. Cadogan on July 19 a telegram from the German Government about the situation in Czechoslovakia, as it appeared two or three days ago.

2. The telegram stated that the Sudeten Germans had complained that the Czechoslovak Government had not discussed the Sudeten proposals, but had only asked for certain further explanations. The Sudeten Party had only seen a 'partial draft' of the Nationalities Statute, and had had no real opportunities of discussing it. What they described as a wholly insufficient draft of a Language Law had been communicated to them, and they had



prepared a written answer, but they had not submitted it to the Czechoslovak Government in the absence of complete information as to the contents of the Statute. The Sudeten Party were apprehensive that the Czechoslovak Government intended to attempt to impose upon them a statute which had not been properly discussed or even completely revealed to them. The general impression which they had gained was that the Czechoslovak Government's proposals would meet their demands to the extent of about 20 per cent., and on that basis a settlement would be quite impossible. In particular they complained that the Language Law did not accord equality of rights as between Czechoslovak and German, and that the proposals for autonomy were insufficient. They expressed the opinion that Czech public opinion had not been adequately prepared for really serious concessions, and they complained of the military preventive measures taken by the Czechoslovak Government. They added that Dr. Krofta was still optimistic, but they feared that he did not understand how critical the situation was.

3. Sir A. Cadogan assured the Ambassador that His Majesty's Government were continuing to do everything they could to urge the Czechoslovak Government to make a satisfactory settlement with the Sudeten Party. In particular they had urged that any points on which agreement had been reached should be ratified by legislation, and that the Czechoslovak Government should continue to negotiate in regard to points still outstanding.

4. In regard to complaints about Czechoslovak military measures Sir A. Cadogan showed the Ambassador Prague telegram No. 368.<sup>1</sup> This telegram had been repeated to you and it was to be expected that you would communicate its contents to the German Government. But he begged the Ambassador also to inform them by telegram. He also read to the Ambassador your telegram No. 312,<sup>2</sup> showing that the German press was still continuing the campaign against the alleged Czechoslovak military preparations. He hoped that the above information would help to show that the reports of these preparations were to say the least exaggerated, and that the German Government would accept our word for that and do what they could to restrain the German press. He added that the dissemination of these rumours by the German press over the week-end had made a bad impression here, and urged the importance, in a time of suspense like the present, of the utmost possible restraint on both sides.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 506.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed. This telegram of June 18 described the German press campaign as unabated.

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 21, 9.30 a.m.)  
No. 380 Telegraphic [C 7304/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 20, 7.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 25 Saving.<sup>1</sup>

I conveyed suggestion for investigation and mediation to President Benes today July 20. He seemed greatly taken aback and much upset, flushing slightly and hardly recovering his full equanimity by the end of a conversation which lasted for over two hours.

2. In order to preclude any doubt of precise nature of your suggestion, I gave the President a written extract from paragraph 8 (exact text follows).<sup>2</sup> I pointed out during our conversation that you were not proposing either an arbitration or imposition of mediator's views upon Czechoslovak Government and that Government's prestige should not suffer if they themselves took the initiative. The President said nevertheless that such a proposal affected the country's sovereignty in a matter in which the Government after the greatest efforts on his part and on that of all concerned were going already to utmost limits possible. It would provoke a most serious crisis in the country and might entail resignation of the Government and even, he hinted very confidentially, his own.

3. He could not give me more than his preliminary and personal views. As President, such a matter went beyond his constitutional competence and a reply must come from the Government. He therefore asked me to submit suggestion to the President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs. He repeatedly begged my approach might be treated only as a preliminary sounding. I equally repeated as often as necessary that I would of course inform you of his request but that I had no authority to depart from my instructions which I read to him more than once using language on this point of your telegram No. 197.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Benes also said that in such an important matter his Government would have to consult with French Government and he hoped that attitude to be adopted could be settled beforehand by confidential discussions between the French, British and Czechoslovak Governments. Meanwhile he assured me that nothing would be done by Czechoslovak Government to precipitate a crisis or a deadlock in Sudeten negotiations. I am sure that he will be careful to carry out assurance because he showed that he was much shaken by this development and that it put him under great pressure.

4. He has certainly lost no time in dealing with it for within an hour of my return at 1.30 p.m. to the Legation I was telephoned firstly by the President of the Council whom I have arranged to see tomorrow morning and also by President Benes who had perhaps in the meantime been a little reassured by Dr. Hodza. Although Dr. Benes had read carefully at the time

<sup>1</sup> No. 508.

<sup>2</sup> For the wording of the memorandum given to Dr. Benes, see No. 531.

<sup>3</sup> No. 516.

the paper which I left with him and I had suggested then that he might be reading too much into it he said over the telephone that having studied it more carefully he appreciated that the suggestion conveyed was less far-reaching than he had at first thought. While no answer was yet possible he did not wish me to have a negative impression and was inclined now to feel that agreement on the subject might be reached. Meanwhile he begged that it might be kept very secret.

5. A more detailed report follows.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

### No. 522

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 20, 10.30 p.m.)*

*No. 381 Telegraphic [C 7305/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 20, 7.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 380.<sup>1</sup>

Written extract, to be regarded only as part of my verbal communication to President, was as follows:

For first two lines of paragraph 8 of your telegram No. 25 Saving<sup>2</sup> substitute words: 'The British Government would be prepared to propose'. Extract then continues down to words 'difficulties that concern them' subject to following alterations:

In line 8 after word 'problem' add words 'at issue'. After word 'disagreement' substitute for words 'between two parties' words 'to which it has given rise'.

In line 10 for words 'two parties' substitute words 'Czechoslovak Government and representatives of Sudeten German party'.

The latter alterations were intended to avoid a direct reference to 'The two parties' and thus do what was possible to diminish an impression which Czechoslovak Government (?particularly)<sup>3</sup> disliked that they and Henlein Opposition party were being put on an equal footing.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 521.

<sup>2</sup> No. 508.

<sup>3</sup> The text is here uncertain.

### No. 523

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Foreign Office (Received July 21)*

*No. 480 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7320/1941/18]*

PARIS, July 20, 1938

Following from the Secretary of State:—

'I had a conversation with M. Bonnet and M. Daladier to-day<sup>1</sup> before the luncheon which M. Bonnet kindly gave me at the Quai d'Orsay. I began by giving them in confidence an account of my interview with Captain

<sup>1</sup> Lord Halifax was in Paris on the occasion of the Royal visit of July 19–22.

Wiedemann in London on Monday, in which I followed as closely as I could the line of the record of that conversation. I told the French Ministers that, naturally, no one could decide between the different possibilities of German action as evidenced, on the one hand, by the various reports reaching us, as they had been reaching them, of German military activity in many fields, and, on the other, by such assurances as those conveyed by Captain Wiedemann. The French Ministers agreed, however, that, for what those assurances were worth, they were of some encouragement as to German intentions.

'2. We then had a good deal of discussion in regard to the Czechoslovak end of the matter. They were both in warm agreement that all possible pressure should be put on Dr. Benes to prevent him bringing his full statute before Parliament on 25 July, whether agreed or disagreed, as that would inevitably have the effect of hardening the position. We had all, no doubt, pressed for expedition in the treatment of the problem, but that was expedition with a view to an agreement, and not with a view to reaching deadlock. I told the Ministers of our communication to Prague a day or two ago, and said that the British Ambassador would no doubt be speaking to them in greater detail with the telegram before him, but that I could tell them the two principal points that we had been concerned to put. The first was to emphasise the unwisdom of the early submission to Parliament of a disagreed statement, of which we had already spoken, and the second was to put definitely to Dr. Benes our proposal of an investigator and mediator, associating with this the further intimation that we might find it necessary at some later date to make this proposal public, along with the response that it had evoked both from him and the Sudetendeutsch leaders. The French Ministers expressed their agreement with the action that we had taken. I made it plain to them that, if and when we took this action, we should not be prepared to assume any responsibility for what the individual selected, whose name I told them, might do. Our responsibility would begin and end with finding him and with turning him loose at Prague to make the best that he could of the business. I thought it important to say this, as I anticipated that Dr. Benes might endeavour to fasten upon us a measure of responsibility for any solution so suggested. We should make it plain to Dr. Benes that in no circumstances should we accept any further commitment beyond the position as stated by the Prime Minister on 24 March. Indeed, I told the French Ministers, although I said they would be well aware of it, that, before I had come to Paris, I had received a visit from the Aga Khan, during which he had stressed the responsibility that lay upon His Majesty's Government to accept no commitment that might involve the British Empire in war. The same, I said, would be the position of South Africa. They would therefore realise the importance of our not going further than we had gone on 24 March. At the same time, I said that, while this was our position, and while we might even in conversation with M. Daladier and M. Bonnet emphasise still further the difficulties of which we were conscious, that in no way prevented us from repeating at Berlin the warnings that we had on more than one occasion given as to what might be the consequences if they

permitted forcible action in Czechoslovakia. M. Daladier said that he perfectly understood our position and that it was necessary to say both things simultaneously at Prague and Berlin respectively.'

No. 524

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan*  
[C 7447/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, July 20, 1938

One of the chief handicaps of Berlin is the almost complete lack of contact with the sole arbiter of Germany's fate. Hitler lives more and more in a practically hermetically sealed case and no one seems even to know who his chief advisers are. Possibly no one.

One is constantly groping in the dark. I said so recently to Weizsäcker. His answer was that a diplomat's job here was an easy one, since Germany's policy was broadcast and anyone could state it. There is some truth in that, since Hitler does say all the time what he intends to do, *vide* 'Mein Kampf' or his speeches.

But it is only a half truth, because he does not tell us how it is going to happen. Possibly he might do that also if he himself knew. Austria was a case in point. Until Schuschnigg produced his plebiscite Hitler himself was not aware how the Anschluss was going to take place.

I fear that the same thing may happen in the case of the Sudeten. Benes may blunder like Schuschnigg did and give Hitler his opportunity, or the Sudeten may themselves rush him or Hitler himself inspire the Sudeten to give the appearance of rushing him.

On every ground of common sense I doubt the likelihood of the latter this year. But admittedly common sense is an uncertain guide when one is dealing with a mystic, a psychopath or a lunatic. Perhaps one, perhaps both, perhaps all three; but in any case a man subject to fits of rage which, as he goes on, gets more and more uncontrollable. It is futile to predict with so unpredictable a character. On March 9 Hitler had, I am absolutely certain, no intention of raping Austria: on March 11 he had, I am fairly certain, no intention of destroying Austria's semi-independence: yet on March 13 he entered Vienna and annexed the whole country.

Hitherto he has not actually announced his intention to incorporate the Sudeten in the Reich: all he has said is that they must have the right of self-determination, that they must be granted self-administration, cultural autonomy and the other rights which are their due, and that he will strike like lightning if German blood is shed. Once he gets going, however, the annexation of the Sudeten areas will be demanded as the only solution compatible with the honour of Germany and the happiness of his Volksgenossen and, if there is war, Prague itself may well be the next step.

Four months ago I telegraphed—but too late—that Schuschnigg was risking the whole independence of Austria. I feel today the same way about



Benes. Newton's last interview with him filled me with dismay. All about German ill-faith and Sudeten ill-faith and his own obstinacy. Now the 'Deutschenfresser' may say what they like and I have no more confidence in German good faith than they have. But if one attempts to be objective, one must admit that since the first fortnight's rabies after the May crisis the German official attitude has not been incorrect. I have no doubt whatsoever that Nazi party money is being spent like water and every encouragement is being given through minor subordinates to the Sudeten. That is inevitable and I fear only reminds me of the support given to Ulster in 1913 and 1914 by English subordinates. But, by and large, I cannot take exception to the German Government's attitude during the past month, and from a tactical point of view it would serve us better if we were to admit it publicly. It does not help always to show distrust. It might help sometimes to give credit on the chance of encouraging the German to believe that he is a good boy. He is not, but he is more likely to be if occasionally you treat him as if he were.

Anyway I see big trouble ahead of us. Some time ago François-Poncet told me that the French Government would go so far as to jettison Benes. I can hardly believe it, but I am not sure than an internal Czech crisis is not one possible solution. Benes is no statesman or he would have seen the writing on the wall long ago. But I fear that the Czechs as a whole are an incorrigibly pig-headed people.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

### No. 525

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 21, 10.0 a.m.)*  
*No. 382 Telegraphic [C 7318/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 21,<sup>1</sup> 1938, 2.45 a.m.

My telegram No. 380.<sup>2</sup>

Before developing proposal in your telegram 25 Saving<sup>3</sup> and in order to prevent President Benes from committing himself prematurely to an attitude of opposition I said I had come with a very important suggestion which I believed and earnestly hoped would be agreeable to him. I hoped this the more because while my present approach was private if it should become apparent that a breakdown of negotiations was impending, with all the dangers for European peace which this would involve, His Majesty's Government might feel constrained to make public the nature of their suggestion and of the response made to it by Czechoslovak Government.

2. After explaining we were already very anxious lest a deadlock were approaching I continued on the lines of paragraph 6 down to the end of your telegram. For the first two sentences of paragraph 8 I substituted slight alteration of the version explained in my telegram 381.<sup>4</sup> As Dr. Benes did

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on July 20.

<sup>3</sup> No. 508.

<sup>2</sup> No. 521.

<sup>4</sup> No. 522.

not enquire about an approach to Sudeten leaders I only conveyed to him the last sentence of paragraph 11.

3. Although I do not think Dr. Benes resented criticisms in paragraphs 6 and 7 and I emphasised passages in the latter paragraphs which might appeal to him, the suggestion itself in paragraph 8 came as a considerable shock. He said that it was a most serious and most unexpected message and he repeated frequently at various stages most of the comments recorded in my telegram under reference.

Other remarks sometimes rather disjointed were as follows:—

4. He would have expected to be sounded before such a vital question was broached and that there would have been prior consultations between London and Paris and Prague, whereat I observed the French Government were no doubt informed of the idea of mediation in the event of a breakdown. Such a proposal he said was liable to put him in an impossible position. Parliament would have to be consulted and he implied that they would never agree. He had always accepted our suggestions and advice but this suggestion amounted to far reaching intervention and he felt he ought to have been sounded first. If Sudeten party got to know of it they would become absolutely intractable and agreement would be impossible. If the party were to be put on an equal footing with Government it would mean that Government were no longer sovereign. The question was after all an internal one.

5. I rejoined that it was also of vital international importance. Our proposal would only take effect if Government failed to solve their problem and would then be limited to investigation and mediation for the purpose of helping Government to continue its search for a solution. Dr. Benes however evidently suspected that in practice it would mean that Czechoslovak Government would be expected to surrender to all the German demands saying it would be a fatal error for the Government to put themselves in a position where the mediator might make some suggestion which they could not possibly accept and thereby precipitate a terrible crisis. I replied that such a crisis could easily arise now and observed that although there might be no satisfactory definition of an aggressor he would be aware that party in a dispute which refused impartial help might thereby gravely prejudice its position.

6. Another observation by Dr. Benes was that he did not wish to be forced to negotiate with Herr Hitler as this would mean an end of his whole policy of support for the League of Nations and collaboration with western Powers. He was, moreover, sure that discussion with the French and British Governments would reveal how to avoid a break of Sudeten negotiations. On the other hand knowing his own public opinion and parliament he thought our proposal would cause a rupture. He must consult the French Government before he could reply. It was not because of Czech and French nor indirectly in British interests that Czechoslovak Government should go beyond certain limits. He thought our intervention premature and regretted so serious a proposal had been made without previous consultation to ascertain what his

Government would be prepared to do. He considered too that if a stand were made the Sudeten German party would become more reasonable and was convinced, given a little time for evolution, the Government proposals would solve the problem. On the two questions however compromise was impossible. Government could neither accept a 'Volkstag' nor territorial autonomy or divisions as these would only be a preparation for secession.

7. President went on to say that in the course of the next few days French and British Governments would be provided with formal detailed statement of Government proposals and of their reasons for them. I pointed out that you would probably have to know the views of the Sudeten German party negotiators on those proposals before you could form judgment upon them. He replied he would have no objection to informing us of those views. I continued that it was partly because the whole question was so difficult that you felt only a thorough and impartial investigation could do justice to it. Dr. Benes whose equanimity had by now been somewhat restored, went on to say that if functions of mediator were akin to those of the observers and came for the purpose of contact and discussion with Czechoslovak Government and also if desired with the Sudeten German party there might be no objection. It would not affect the prestige of the Government to give full information. This was one of the occasions when I drew Dr. Benes's attention to the nature of our proposal and to the fact that it might be less inconsistent with Czechoslovak sovereignty or prestige than he seemed to think.

8. President Benes assured me that Government had realised the necessity for giving the Sudeten German party time to comment and negotiate on Government programme. He said too that communiqué reported in my telegram No. 366<sup>5</sup> had been issued in consequence of my representations to him on previous day. The Government proposals would be explained orally in the first place and written text might not be ready, if my recollection of this point is correct, until next week. It would be communicated to all the parties but would not be published. Text moreover would not be unalterable and reasonable counter-proposals could be incorporated. Meanwhile no date would be fixed for dealing with these matters in Parliament. Parliament might be convoked by the end of this month but would have other business for despatch.

9. A crisis would however come if the Sudeten Germans insisted on either a Volkstag or territorial autonomy. By the latter he evidently meant autonomy for territory as a whole inhabited by a majority of any one nationality because he went on to say in communes there would be complete autonomy and that in districts (Bez[irke?]) there would be a large measure of autonomy. In the provinces there would be a diet with real powers to exercise largely through Curiae each of which would moreover have a separate and quite real competence. The diet would have its own executive committee (Ausschuss)

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. This communiqué of July 17 stated that the Government did not wish anyone or any political group to be presented with a *fait accompli*, and that, before Parliament met, the Government were meeting the Sudeten German and other national groups in various conferences.

consisting of members of different nationalities, each of whom would have his own department in which he would be largely independent. National self-administration would I understood be further provided for by a division of certain functions on national lines, e.g. in administration of hospitals.

10. At about this stage I mentioned to Dr. Benes, as a purely personal idea, that apart from the difficulties of achieving an agreed settlement now, difficulties and dangers and hostile propaganda might be apprehended in regard to its subsequent fulfilment. It occurred to me that possibly here impartial assistance if available might be useful. Without making any particular comment on this suggestion Dr. Benes went on to say that it might be possible now to agree upon the main principles and that details would have to be settled in collaboration with the Sudeten German party in the autumn. Sudeten German party must however, said Dr. Benes, come into the Government some day.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

#### No. 526

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 21, 8.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 383. Telegraphic [C 7372/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 21, 1938, 5.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 380.<sup>1</sup>

I repeated my exposition today to the President of the Council who had of course already been generally informed of it by President Benes. Dr. Hodza said that he would try to convince his colleagues in the Cabinet that offer should be regarded as proof of goodwill of His Majesty's Government and therefore accepted. One difficulty was how to avoid putting Sudeten German party on the same footing as Government of State.

2. While the action proposed was exceptional he personally would welcome arrival of Lord Runciman and I gathered the sooner the better. I pointed out step was at present to be regarded as action in reserve to meet any imminent danger of a breakdown. He felt sure that a breakdown must come, later if not sooner. Nevertheless he considered himself to be now in a position to grant up to 70 per cent. of substance of Sudeten demands in the matter of autonomy; but autonomy would have to be national and not territorial as the latter might be a stage towards separation. Nor could there be any national divisions in central parliament as that had to represent the whole State.

3. Dr. Hodza was inclined to suggest that he might himself broach your proposal to Sudeten German representatives or at least prepare the way. I told him that any such move would be premature. The first approach was being made now privately to Czechoslovak Government and until you had their reply you could not decide upon next step. I emphasized moreover that if attitude of his Government was favourable His Majesty's Government

<sup>1</sup> No. 521.

would use their best efforts with the German Government to secure acceptance by Sudeten party.

4. Dr. Hodza hopes to be able to give me reply of Government by end of this week.

**No. 527**

*Viscount Halifax to Mr. Newton (Prague)*  
*No. 199 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7369/1941/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 21, 1938, 6.45 p.m.

It is important that we should be able through our usual channels to assure Henlein at once that there is no longer any danger of the Nationalities Statute being presented to Parliament as an indivisible whole before Sudeten representatives have had an adequate opportunity of discussing it fully with the Czech Government. Is it safe for us to give this assurance? We hope that it may be so in view of the assurance given to you by M. Benes as reported at the end of paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 380.<sup>1</sup>

We must have your answer by tomorrow morning, as it is necessary to state the position to the Sudeten emissary tomorrow afternoon. Henlein is due to have an interview with Hitler between the 26th and the 30th, and if our assurance on this point is satisfactory our intermediary will endeavour to see Henlein before this date in order to encourage him to persevere in his policy of moderation, which he is at present inclined to abandon in disgust.

<sup>1</sup> No. 521.

**No. 528**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 22, 9.30 a.m.)*  
*No. 390 Telegraphic [C 7376/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 21, 1938, 8.6 p.m.

My telegram No. 383.<sup>1</sup>

President of the Council seems to be in some doubt as to how to proceed with communication of Government proposals to Sudeten German representatives. He is afraid that their presentation in writing might be made occasion for a breach since he fears extremists are in the ascendant. I gathered that he will judge of this when he meets representatives and sees their attitude towards his preliminary verbal explanation. If necessary he will continue his previous practice of communicating written proposals only in private as he is determined to give no grounds for a breach at this juncture.

2. As result of a casual remark during our conversation I learned that cost of reforms proposed by Government is estimated by Minister of Finance at over three million five hundred and twenty thousand pounds.

3. I informed Dr. Hodza of substance of second and third paragraphs of Berlin telegram to you No. 315<sup>2</sup> and of second paragraph of your telegram to Berlin No. 290.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. 526.

<sup>2</sup> No. 517.

<sup>3</sup> No. 520.



4. As regards Language Law Dr. Hodza explained to me that Germans objected to maintenance of a State language. This was, however, indispensable if only to prevent conditions of a Tower of Babel being reproduced in certain cases. For example, for general direction of Parliament by Speaker only one language could be used and in the army commands must be given in Czech although for instruction other languages might be used.

Repeated to Berlin Saving and copy sent to Paris.

No. 529

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 22)*

*No. 344 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7374/4786/18]*

BERLIN, July 21, 1938

On receipt of Mr. Newton's telegram No. 368<sup>1</sup> I immediately communicated substance in writing to State Secretary.

I have now received following reply dated July 20.

'My dear Ambassador,

'I have received with thanks your letter of July 18 in which you communicated to me the report of the English observers with regard to military movements on the German-Czechoslovak frontier. The negative result of the tour of the observers in question stands in open contradiction to the information available here which is based partly on the reports of eye-witnesses and partly on observations which anyone was in a position to make from the German side of the frontier. According thereto a renewed strengthening of the Czech garrisons in the frontier zone is a matter of no doubt whatever, even though it is admitted that it took place not in a few hours, as in May, but over a space of several days and was thus less noticeable. I may add that since as is generally known the Czech Army has been almost on a mobilized basis since May, it was only necessary to call up reserves on a very small scale for this purpose. Furthermore the above-mentioned movements were largely completed on the day of the English gentlemen's tour, i.e. on July 17, so that on that day troop movements were scarcely to be observed any longer from the high road.

'It is thus established, contrary to the report made by the English observers, according to all the information available here that a strengthening of the garrisons in the Czech frontier zone took place.

'Yours sincerely,  
'WEIZSÄCKER.'

I shall take first opportunity of pointing out to State Secretary that if Czech Army had been almost on a mobilised basis since May, German Army is hardly less so. In these circumstances and in view of wild talk in certain quarters here Czech precautions do not seem unjustified or provocative.

Repeated to Prague and Paris.

<sup>1</sup> No. 506.

*Letter from Mr. Strang to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

[C 7315/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, July 21, 1938

Dear Henderson,

Your telegram No. 330 Saving<sup>1</sup> of 14 July and the Military Attaché's reports of which copies were enclosed in your despatches Nos. 676 and 679<sup>2</sup> of July 5 suggested that any German military precautions which were being taken at present were being taken not necessarily with the immediate object of attacking Czechoslovakia, but rather because the General Staff intend to be prepared for all eventualities. In your telegram No. 310<sup>3</sup> of July 18 you reported some information of a disquieting nature, but suggested that it represented a policy of deliberate bluff and did not necessarily invalidate the above conclusion.

2. We are in general agreement with this estimate of the military situation, so far as the immediate future is concerned, but I feel you should know of the following information which has reached us from secret sources (a) dealing with recent precautionary measures, and (b) suggesting that trouble may be in store for us in the autumn. We should be glad to receive your comments on these reports.

3. (a) We learned on 6 July that an order had been issued to all Company Sergeant Majors that they were to live in barracks from 15 July, as a continual state of alarm was to be expected from that date. About the same time we heard that a member of the Luftwaffe Reserve at Stuttgart had been ordered to report to his unit for four to six weeks' training on 15 July. As this particular reservist had already been called up for training about 10 March and stood by for several weeks at the time of the Anschluss, the fact that he has again been called up is abnormal. According to the same report, Army reservists had also been ordered to report to their units for training on July 15.

4. The following explanation has since been suggested which might account for both the above reports and would fit in with the estimate in your telegram No. 330 Saving. General Keitel was, it appears, asked by Field-Marshal Göring at the end of May if he could accelerate the time which had been taken for the partial mobilization and troop concentrations at the time of the Anschluss in March, and subsequently during the Czechoslovakia crisis in May. General Keitel had replied 'no', whereas the Chief of the S.S. had said 'yes'. An order had then gone out, and the authorities concerned with mobilization were given until 13 July to rectify faults and shorten the period required for any future mobilization. This did not, however, necessarily mean that any mobilization was fixed for 15 July.

5. In contrast to the above disturbing signs of military preparations, it appears that leave is still being granted up to the end of August to German Staff officers, although this is of course liable to cancellation at short notice.

<sup>1</sup> No. 487.<sup>2</sup> Not printed.<sup>3</sup> No. 507.

There is, however, plenty of evidence to show that the construction of fortifications in the West, including the Dutch frontier, is proceeding with great haste; so much so, that on one occasion civilian transport was suddenly impressed to move material. A recent report has also just come in that Railway Protective troops (Bahnschutz) are under orders to report to their headquarters on 15 August.<sup>4</sup>

6. (b) We have had other information suggesting that although no serious trouble was expected until after the Party Rally in Nuremberg at the beginning of September, and after the gathering of the harvest, a danger period would then begin which would last until the winter sets in. Other sources have suggested that there is a definite plan for a German attack on Czechoslovakia to take place after the harvest is in. Everything was, however, very uncertain, and the Führer was reported to have been in a very depressed mood and to have been inaccessible recently. The only leaders who were supposed to have seen much of him for some weeks past were Hess and von Ribbentrop, neither of whom is likely to have exercised a restraining influence.

7. According to yet another source, it would appear that the Führer and Göring have decided to march on Prague in the coming autumn, and the necessary military preparations are being made. Large stocks of petrol and oil are being laid in by the Air Force, and a special filtering plant for cleansing oil for further use, and so economising the available fuel, has been laid down at the experimental stations at Aldershof and Rechlin. Autumn has been chosen for this 'coup' because (1) after the end of August the new harvest will have been milled, and (2) the British and French air armaments will not be in full swing before 1939, whereas Germany will be relatively well equipped, and, according to the German Air Ministry would have a good 51 per cent. chance of success by the end of this summer. Germany also hopes to estrange London and Paris over developments in Spain by the coming autumn. She does not think she should wait any longer because she may otherwise be unable to counter the increasing economic influence of Great Britain and France in Hungary and the Balkans. To bring Hungary finally under German domination, Czechoslovakia must be destroyed in advance and Hungary satisfied with some of the spoils. Lastly, she hopes that if German forces invade Czechoslovakia, H.M.G. would at least hesitate until the conquest was completed. Germany would then offer peace terms in the hope that England would persuade France to accept them. This last information is very similar to that communicated to you by your Czechoslovak colleague and reported in your telegram No. 305 of 15 July.<sup>5</sup> It is also supported by the pieces of evidence reported in your telegram No. 310 of July 18.

8. Finally, the following more recent indications have been received that Germany may be preparing for war in the near future:

(i) All leave to places outside Germany has been stopped for members of the German armed forces from August 1 onwards;

<sup>4</sup> In a letter of July 25 this date was corrected to 'September 15'.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. See No. 494, note 1.

(ii) At the end of June the German armaments industry was ordered to double its previous output. The foreign exchange acquired in Vienna has eased the raw materials situation for the next few months, and important armaments contracts must be completed by the end of July or the beginning of August, instead of by the late autumn;

(iii) All female labour not engaged on important armaments work has received instructions during the past month for war-time duties to replace men who will be mobilised;

(iv) Senior officers of one of the general military Commands in South Germany are making every effort to move their families as soon as possible to Switzerland.

(v) The S.S. have taken over the duties of the frontier police since the beginning of June, a step which it was only intended to take in case of war.

9. In view of the nature of the sources from which the above information has been obtained, will you please destroy this letter after you have sent us your comments.<sup>6</sup>

W. STRANG

<sup>6</sup> A copy of this letter was sent to Mr. Newton on July 26.

**No. 531**

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 30)*

*No. 258 [C 7689/1941/18]*

BRITISH LEGATION, PRAGUE, *July 21, 1938*

My Lord,

With reference to paragraph 2 of my telegram No. 380<sup>1</sup> of July 20, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the extract of paragraph 8 of your Saving Telegram No. 25,<sup>2</sup> with the amendments recorded in my telegram No. 381,<sup>3</sup> which I handed to President Benes in the course of my audience on July 20.

2. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Paris and Berlin.

I have etc.

B. E. NEWTON

ENCLOSURE IN No. 531

The British Government would be prepared to propose an impartial person of standing and repute who should be sent at the right moment to Czechoslovakia for the joint purpose of investigating and mediation who would be quite independent of His Majesty's Government or any other Government, and whose function it would be to acquaint himself with the character of the problem at issue and with the causes of disagreement to which it has given rise, and endeavour by his advice and influence to maintain contact between the Czechoslovak Government and the representatives of the Sudeten German party, or to restore it in the event of a breakdown. It would be essential, of course, that the individual selected should proceed

<sup>1</sup> No. 521.

<sup>2</sup> No. 508.

<sup>3</sup> No. 522.

with the assent and if possible at the request of both the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten representatives, and that both sides should undertake to give him all facilities and to explain to him fully their respective points of view and the difficulties that concern them.

No. 532

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 22, 9.30 a.m.)*

*No. 319 Telegraphic [C 7375/1941/18]*

BERLIN, July 22, 1938, 12.0 a.m.<sup>1</sup>

French Ambassador called on me yesterday having cut short his cure at Gastein and returned to Berlin on his way through to Paris to-night to report on situation here. He was extremely pessimistic and will I gather inform French Government that he anticipated action on the part of Germany in three weeks' time when Siegfried line will in his opinion be ready.

2. It is true that stories of German military preparedness are on the increase though so far they are mostly isolated cases and I cannot fairly describe them as more than readiness for all eventualities as distinct from evidence of determination to act in any case. So long as there is no solution of Sudeten problem such readiness must be regarded as highly disquieting but inevitable factor in the situation and I still hold the view that Herr Hitler has not yet made up his mind that the Gordian knot must be cut with the saw (*sic*) if no settlement is reached before September. Your conversation with Captain Wiedemann if it was as reported in 'The Times' confirms me in this view even though publication may I fear be resented as an indiscretion by the Chancellor and if so will discount the value of the *démarche* made. I have in fact no substantial reason to believe that Herr Hitler has yet abandoned policy of pacific solution even though based on sheer opportunism and temporary unpreparedness. Appointment of independent mediator if accepted by Czechoslovak Government is therefore at least calculated to prevent immediate crisis from developing.

3. At the same time judging by notes which State Secretary read to me of Czech proposals for Nationality Statute as well as by Mr. Newton's telegrams I derive the conclusion, superficial though it necessarily is, that M. Benes's concessions are far removed from what can honestly be described as a 'comprehensive scheme of reform'. In effect it would seem to be a modified statute for treatment of minorities rather than placing of Sudeten on a real footing of equality with Czechs.

4. Main burden of State Secretary's criticism a few days ago was that measures proposed made no attempt to convert national Czech state into state of nationalities on Swiss Federal lines as originally promised by Czech leaders including M. Benes in 1918. Basis of plan was, he said, creation of four divisions each with its own Diet in Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Ruthenia. Even . . .<sup>2</sup> of local Curia was restricted. While constituting sop

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on July 21.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.



to Slovaks who would be in the majority in their division, those of Bohemia and Moravia would ensure that Sudeten were always kept in minority to Czechs.

5. If M. Benes is determined to preserve purely national Czech character of the state I do not see and never have seen the slightest prospect of permanence or hope that Sudeten will accept agreed settlement. Moreover in such a national state prospect of neutralisation becomes even more problematical.

6. In these circumstances, without radical modification of M. Benes's Nationalities Statute I fear efforts of independent mediator will in any case be sterile. Might it not then be possible to ask Italian Government to join with His Majesty's Government in proposing to German Government and French Government a conference of the Four Powers to deal with the problem: the first three Powers on grounds of being chiefly responsible for creation of Czechoslovakia and the latter as the Power particularly interested? This might also be an alternative if M. Benes finds difficulty in accepting independent mediator.<sup>3</sup>

7. In any case I feel that the sands are running out. If M. Benes forces legislation through Czech Parliament regardless of Sudeten agreement, there are likely to be violent protests, the latter will lead to demonstrations and they in their turn may end in shootings. It may then be too late to intervene.

8. My Yugoslav colleague who called on me this morning before going to Bled informed me that in conversation recently with two German generals with considerable political influence, the latter had said to him that military were absolutely opposed to war, that if they had to fight they would prefer to choose their own opportunity but that if there was a serious incident, war was inevitable and German army was ready for it. I believe this to be a fairly accurate picture of the position. My belief is that Germans are as apprehensive of war as the rest of us and that military preparations have a defensive as well as offensive side to them. My United States colleague who also came to see me to-day believes as I do—that one of the main objects of intensive work on Siegfried line is to warn France that her insistence on support of Czechoslovakia will cost her dearly. My new Roumanian colleague told me to-day that when he first met Field-Marshal Göring last week the latter told him that if there were a general war Germany would possibly lose it but that there would be very few Czechs left alive at the end of it. Last part was typically Göring but the first part indicates a nervousness which impressed me when I saw the Field-Marshal three weeks ago.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Strang, in a letter of July 30 to Sir N. Henderson, pointed out, on the instructions of the Secretary of State, that Italian participation in a conference (a) would be likely to stiffen the German attitude, (b) would make it 'difficult to exclude Russia from the Conference seeing that she is, in certain contingencies, the ally of Czechoslovakia'. Mr. Strang continued: 'Indeed to invite Italy and not Russia in such circumstances would be to admit the thin end of the German wedge for keeping the latter out of Europe altogether, and this is clearly not an aspect of German policy which we wish to encourage.' Mr. Strang also explained that the Polish Government would object to the idea of a four-Power settlement of a problem in which Poland was directly interested.

9. Nevertheless however unpopular war certainly would be here amongst the great mass of the population there is undoubtedly a considerable section which is spoiling for it. And if it came and however unpopular it were, Germany would march as one man at Herr Hitler's orders.

10. My United States colleague believes plebiscite is the only permanent and possible solution. He has so informed State Department though he said the latter refused to exercise any pressure at Prague on ground that it would not lend itself to bullying of small by a big nation. Mr. Wilson told me confidentially however that he proposed to go to Prague himself early in August and talk straight to M. Benes whom he knew well at Geneva. The Ambassador also mentioned that in conversation yesterday State Secretary had said that though German Government fully appreciate the efforts of His Majesty's Government at Prague they felt that whatever phraseology was used Czechs were convinced that my representations to Herr von Ribbentrop on May 21 in fact pledged Great Britain to come to support of France in protection of Czechoslovakia under all circumstances and that it was this conviction which encouraged the Czechs to be irreconcilable. United States Ambassador in this connexion was urgent that public announcement should be made to the effect that sympathy of British public depended on whether M. Benes showed a real spirit of compromise and conciliation. My Italian colleague also told me today that in his opinion plebiscite would be only possible alternative to war in the event of real deadlock. As for my Yugoslav colleague he asserted that while Little Entente Treaty would be operative if Hungary attacked Czechoslovakia in no circumstances would Yugoslavia attack Germany's [*sic*] army even if the latter, as has been rumoured, marched through Hungary to take Czechoslovakia from the southern and most vulnerable flank.

Repeated to Paris and Prague.

#### No. 533

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 22, 12.15 a.m.)  
No. 391 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7371/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 22, 1938

Your telegram No. 199.<sup>1</sup>

You will see I have already covered the point so far as I can in paragraph 8 of my telegram No. 382<sup>2</sup> despatched July 20.

2. The assurance by President Benes was of course given to me for His Majesty's Government so that care is desirable in using it in conversations with Herr Henlein. His party are apt to read an abnormal amount into their interpretation of language used by themselves or others unofficially and may stretch word 'adequate' to unsuspected lengths. By 'time' President Benes obviously meant 'adequate time' but equally obviously he did not surrender the right of interpretation of what was adequate. I feel a little mistrustful

<sup>1</sup> No. 527.

<sup>2</sup> No. 525.

because Henlein Party have themselves (see my telegram No. 283<sup>3</sup> Saving July 5) announced that they have already received a general assurance (which should, however, presumably be interpreted as explained in paragraph 5 of my telegram No. 341<sup>4</sup> July 9). They could no doubt obtain further assurances themselves direct if they so desired. The Government communiqué reported in first paragraph of my telegram No. 366<sup>5</sup> and referred to by President Benes on July 20 might be worth quoting to Herr Henlein, as it was expressly intended as an assurance against a *fait accompli*. On the other hand Czech Government would not regard themselves as bound in any sense which would enable the Sudeten German Party or Reich to block indefinitely, or make unacceptable conditions for, the introduction of legislation which Czechoslovak Government themselves think necessary. Nor do I follow why Herr Henlein attaches so much importance to question of an assurance as no valid reason for his Party to make trouble from it can arise unless and until legislation to which he objects is in fact introduced. My telegram No. 386<sup>6</sup> July 21 shows President maintains his objection in principle to piece-meal legislation.

3. You will see from my telegrams Nos. 380 and 382<sup>7</sup> July 20 and 383<sup>8</sup> and first paragraph of 390<sup>9</sup> July 21 that Government have no intention themselves to give any avoidable excuse for precipitating a crisis and that Dr. Hodza hesitates for that very reason even to communicate long awaited Government proposals officially and in writing to the Sudeten representative who on the other hand keeps complaining of delay. It would enable Dr. Hodza to escape from this dilemma and help to remove one possibility of an immediate crisis if you could obtain constructive assurance from Herr Henlein that when Government proposals are communicated his Party will not make them an occasion for a crisis but will in their conversation give Czechoslovak Government adequate time to reply to any comments which Sudeten German Party may have to make on past proposals [*sic*].

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.

<sup>4</sup> No. 474.

<sup>5</sup> Not printed. See No. 525, note 5.

<sup>6</sup> Not printed. In this telegram Mr. Newton reported that on July 20 President Benes maintained his objection to piecemeal legislation on the grounds that any agreed settlement must be for both sides a mixture of agreeable and disagreeable things, and therefore more likely to be accepted if taken as a whole.

<sup>7</sup> Nos. 521 and 525.

<sup>8</sup> No. 526.

<sup>9</sup> No. 528.

#### No. 534

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan*  
[C 7868/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, July 22, 1938

The Czechoslovak Minister on his return a few days ago from Prague told me that he was deeply concerned at the growth of exasperation and bitter hatred among his countrymen against the Germans. The protest made by

the Sudeten Deputy to the Czech Government (see my telegram No. 346 Saving),<sup>1</sup> on the subject of hymns of hate in schools and barracks, is regrettable evidence of this. Such sentiments are inevitably reciprocal.

It is not therefore surprising that an increasing number of my more objectively minded colleagues (United States and South African in particular) incline to the view that a plebiscite affords the only possible solution. (My own view is that it constitutes a last resort calculated to avoid war.)

It is easy and popular to put all the blame on Germany, as Dr. Benes is prone to do. In all fairness I doubt if this is nearly the whole truth and it would certainly be difficult to prove. Though I have taken advantage of every opportunity, I have had little legitimate occasion to take serious exception to the attitude of the German press since the end of the first outburst early in June after the May crisis. The campaign has gone steadily on but it has been relatively moderate and has at least refrained from extreme claims such as a plebiscite, neutrality, etc. Moreover there has probably been at least as much provocation in the Czech press: not that that is any real excuse.

It is easy to say but impossible to prove that Germany does not desire a settlement. Probably she does not seek a permanent one, but on evidence I should say that Herr Hitler at least hopes, if only on empirical grounds, that a temporary peaceful solution will be found. In my opinion Germany's attitude has not so far been incorrect during the past two months, in the sense that she has left us unimpeded in our mediation at Prague.

It is also easy for Dr. Benes to attribute all ill faith and all difficulties to Germans and Sudeten, but I fancy that strict impartiality would distribute blame fairly equally. Certainly those of my colleagues who know Benes best are those who trust him least and extremists are not confined to one side of the frontier—or of any frontier, *vide* Cot and Mandel in France and the Jews and communists everywhere.

I do not see how Benes can have it both ways. He cannot hope to keep 3 million Germans permanently and unwillingly in a position of inferiority to 7 million Czechs, except by force—which in the last resort means by British military aid, since France and Russia alone without England would not avail. Either therefore he must treat them as equals and display confidence in them in the hope that on those conditions they will remain citizens of his country or he must make up his mind to lose them. If he persists in treating them as a minority in whom no faith can be placed, it may in fact be preferable to have a plebiscite, with all its disadvantages and inherent risks, now rather than allow the matter to drag on under constant threat of war. I have never advocated a plebiscite except as a threat to induce the Czechoslovak Government to go to the limit of concessions, but I submit that it should now be definitely considered, if Dr. Benes refuses to make fundamental changes in the Government proposals. There can be no agreed settlement without some

<sup>1</sup> Not printed. This telegram of July 23 reported a D.N.B. message that the Sudeten deputy Kundt had interpellated the Government on the singing of ribald songs about Herr Hitler in Czech schools and by Czech troops.

measure of territorial self-government. Otherwise the new Statute will be purely a new Minority Law and the reference to Nationalities a sham.

There seems to me to be the same lack of realism in Dr. Benes's constant appeals to France and England on the ground that Czechoslovakia represents the last bastion against Germany's expansion eastward. It may be so, though I would put it differently. The Czechs may be so but not the Czechs-cum-Sudeten. And so long as the Sudeten are expected to participate in defending that bastion, it is a doctrine which is directly opposed to any idea of appeasement in Europe. There can never be appeasement in Europe so long as Czechoslovakia remains the link with Moscow and hostile to Germany. Czechoslovakia can never enjoy a moment's peace so long as she remains the enemy of Germany. It is a case of the inexorable logic of geographical position. If she wants to survive at all she must come economically within the orbit of Germany. We poor mortals can kick against logic but we can never prevail against it in the end.

Yrs ever

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 535

*Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

*No. 295 Telegraphic [C 7475/7262/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *July 23, 1938, 12 noon.*

1. The Prime Minister received the German Ambassador on July 22<sup>1</sup> and said he would like to say one or two things which, if the Ambassador thought fit, he might transmit to Herr Hitler.

2. The Ambassador having stated, in reply to a question, that Captain Wiedemann had given him an account of his conversation with me, the Prime Minister expressed regret that there had been leakage in the press, but observed that the press had not discovered the main object of Captain Wiedemann's journey of which no word had yet appeared.

3. The Prime Minister then said that we had been glad to have the assurances of the German Government as to their desire for a peaceful settlement in Czechoslovakia, but that these assurances had always been accompanied by the qualification that if there were a massacre of a number of Sudeten Germans, no consideration would stop Herr Hitler from marching in. The Prime Minister regarded such a contingency as remote, but since it was repeatedly mentioned by the German authorities he thought it right to say that they should not consider us as accepting the inevitability of forceful

<sup>1</sup> This telegram was drafted on July 22. It is based, largely *verbatim*, on a note of the conversation sent by the Prime Minister to the Foreign Office. The only omissions of substance in the telegram are (i) a reference by name to Field-Marshal Göring as the 'German statesman' who might pay a visit to England: (ii) a reference by the Ambassador to this proposed visit in the following terms: 'He felt certain himself that once the Field-Marshal set his foot on British soil and had an opportunity of seeing for himself the country and its economic and military might, all would be straightened out between us.'



action even in the face of such a provocation. He recalled the patience of His Majesty's Government in the face of accusations of weakness over the bombing of British ships in Spanish ports and observed that we had resisted incitements to violence. In the end, without retaliation we had achieved our object and the bombing of ships had stopped. So, too, in Czechoslovakia, whatever the incidents, we could not feel that they would justify forceful or retaliatory action and we believed that other methods could be discovered which would be free from the dangers of starting a conflict and yet would produce equally satisfactory results.

4. The Prime Minister said, however, that he wished to consider a more probable contingency, namely, that negotiations between Czechoslovakia and the Sudeten Germans should fail. I had asked Wiedemann what procedure would be favoured by Herr Hitler in such an event and Wiedemann had replied that Herr Hitler would wish to get negotiations resumed in whatever way this could best be arranged. The Ambassador asked the Prime Minister to repeat this statement, which he did and added that that was also our view. We were revolving in our minds whether it was possible to make any proposal in such an event and, if it occurred, it might be that we should have some proposal to make. In the meantime, the Prime Minister urged strongly the necessity for patience and for avoiding violence. The Ambassador replied that he shared the Prime Minister's opinion; that he was sure that Berlin did not desire any conflict and that they would be patient and not attempt to precipitate a decision, although present proposals of the Czechoslovak Government were entirely unsatisfactory and the matter could not remain indefinitely unsettled without being a source of danger. He added that a certain amount of propaganda was essential to keep up the interest of the German people, but intimated that we must not take it as meaning an intention to interfere by violence.

5. As regards a visit in the future of a German statesman to this country, the Prime Minister said that His Majesty's Government would not only consent to it, but would welcome it, subject to two conditions. The first was that adequate preparation should be made to ensure the success of the visit and the second that the atmosphere should be as favourable as possible, particularly in connexion with Czechoslovakia.

6. The Ambassador subsequently informed a member of the Prime Minister's staff<sup>2</sup> that he had been most pleased by his conversation with the Prime Minister. He made it clear that he fully understood what the Prime Minister meant by his reference to the need not to allow an 'incident' to stand in the way of attempts to resolve any deadlock that might occur in Czechoslovakia. He mentioned that the German Government did not evince 'excitement' over the deaths of the two Germans in May and he seemed to think that they could show the patience for which the Prime Minister had asked.

7. The Ambassador also mentioned that the Prime Minister had referred to his statement in the House of Commons in March about not going on with the Anglo-German conversations, and had said that he meant only

<sup>2</sup> Sir H. Wilson.

that in the circumstances they could not be proceeded with then: this meant interruption, not abandonment. (This has since been confirmed by the Prime Minister.)

#### No. 536

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 23, 4.20 p.m.)*  
*No. 393 Telegraphic [C 7452/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 23, 1938, 2.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 383.<sup>1</sup>

President of the Council handed to me this morning the reply of the Czechoslovak Government. Translation from French follows in my telegram No. 394.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking quite personally he added that he would be glad if Lord Runciman could come as soon as possible.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 526.

<sup>2</sup> No. 537.

#### No. 537

*Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received July 23, 6.0 p.m.)*  
*No. 394 Telegraphic [C 7453/1941/18]*

PRAGUE, July 23, 1938, 4 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.<sup>1</sup>

Following is translation of reply, begins:—

‘The Czechoslovak Government appreciates very highly the constant interest which His Majesty’s Government shows in development of the situation in Czechoslovakia. It entirely shares anxiety and desire of His Majesty’s Government to find methods and means which might lead to a permanent . . .<sup>2</sup> in Central Europe. For this reason it has already very willingly welcomed attachment to British Legation at Prague of observers whose activity has not failed to have gratifying results.

In bills which are now in preparation the Czechoslovak Government desires to lay a solid and definite basis for a sympathetic, honest, just, and equitable solution of the Nationalities question, safeguarding at the same time the vital interests, the unity, and integrity of the country. It will therefore be glad of every support which could be granted to it in this work, and believing that it is in this hope of perfect harmony of ideas with the British and the French Governments, it begs His Majesty’s Government to be good enough to indicate a person who would be ready with his opinion and advice to help to overcome difficulties which might eventually still arise.

This person would have all facilities and all information which would be necessary for the accomplishment of this mission. He would be independent of the British Government and of any other Government.<sup>3</sup> Ends.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> No. 536.

<sup>2</sup> The text is here uncertain.

## APPENDIX I

### Additional exchange of letters between Lord Halifax and Sir N. Henderson, March 20–July 18, 1938

In addition to the letters included above in this volume, the Foreign Office archives contain copies of eight other letters exchanged between the Secretary of State and Sir N. Henderson during the period March 20–July 18, 1938. The letters are printed in this Appendix.

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11048/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *March 20, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

Kirkpatrick is taking this letter to London with him and can give you any information you may require as to this end of the picture.

Until now I have never felt anxious about a *coup* in Czechoslovakia, as I always felt that Austria would come first. Now that Austria is an accomplished fact, we are faced with the perpetual possibility of a repetition there—on more or less similar lines—of what has occurred in Austria. I do not personally believe in any immediate danger for a number of reasons, but there is, regardless of what I believe, the possibility at any moment of a *coup*. Even Hitler may not be able to prevent a big demonstration in Czechoslovakia itself of the Sudeten, such as the Czechs cannot repress except by force, and bloodshed on any appreciable scale would inevitably produce the arrival of German troops to protect their *Volks-genossen*.

That is the position as I see it. Though I do not foresee any immediate trouble, particularly if we can get over the next few weeks without it (i.e. until after the excitement caused by Austria has begun to subside), we are nevertheless at the mercy of any sudden incident such as Schuschnigg and his plebiscite.

It is a terribly difficult problem—of all the dragons' teeth which the Versailles Treaty sowed—the most difficult to solve without war. Even the old argument that the Sudeten had never belonged to the German Reich no longer holds good since Austria itself has now become an integral part of that Reich. I can see every moral ground for a war to save the world from Germany's policy of the use of naked force: but I cannot see that we are on good moral ground—in this 20th century with its principles of nationality and the right of self-determination—if we make war to compel 3½ million Sudeten Germans to remain inferior subjects of a Slav state. If we won the war, we should have to redraw the frontiers of Czechoslovakia, so as to leave the mass of the Sudeten outside them. Ready though I would be to say to Hitler to-morrow 'Enough of your rough houses, for the next time you indulge in them, you will find an united England and British Empire in arms against you', I cannot regard the Sudeten as a just motive, under present conditions. It might possibly become so, if Benes were to accept quite different conditions than now exist for the Sudeten.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *March 30, 1938*

Dear Secretary of State,

General Temperley who is paying a short visit to Berlin was asked to-day by Weizsäcker (who will succeed Mackensen as No. 2 in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs) if we were prepared to go on with our conversations as the German Government, for their part, did not regard what had happened in Austria as having affected those negotiations. Temperley replied that he knew nothing about it.

I have, of course, not mentioned the subject of colonies to anybody since March 3rd and, unless otherwise instructed, I do not propose to do so. The next move lies in any case with the German Government who have undertaken to put their views on our colonial proposal in writing. I imagine that we neither wish to prevent them from expressing those views [n]or to encourage them to do so.

If I am approached on the subject my normal reaction would be to say that I am waiting for the promised written reply while adding that after Germany's last display of jungle law I find it difficult to believe that His Majesty's Government would be in the mood to think about colonies.

Do you agree? Hopeless though it looks, I would rather not bang the door as we may one day wish to reopen it in connexion with Czechoslovakia.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

[C 11049/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 4, 1938*

My dear Henderson,

Thank you very much for your letter of March 30th regarding the possibility of a renewal of our conversations with the German Government.

I agree that the next move lies with the German Government. The Chancellor promised a written reply on the colonial question, and we must clearly await its receipt. I would not, however, remind the German Government of that fact, nor press for the written reply, as I think the prospect of any action of the kind we are contemplating in the colonial sphere has necessarily receded, under the influence of recent events. The Germans of course do not understand—or affect not to understand—what difficulty we should in any case have had with our public opinion over the question of colonial restitution in any form. In present circumstances, I very much doubt whether it would be practical politics, unless indeed the German Government was prepared itself to make some real make-weight contribution. And this does not look very likely now. The line of reply, therefore, that you suggest seems the right one, if you are approached on the subject.

But I should nevertheless hope that you might be able to make it in such form that would not shut the door—and make it more difficult than it anyhow must be to get going again. I do not think that we ought to give up the idea of getting on to terms with them, difficult as it no doubt is. Too much depends on the chance for us to let it go, until we are quite convinced that the attempt is hopeless.

There are, as I see it, two kinds of difficulty:

- (1) that involved in the resumption of conversations at all in the present state of British feeling; and
- (2) that which, in any circumstances, would be created by approaching a colonial settlement in isolation.

These really hang together, inasmuch as they would both be greatly eased if the Germans were really willing to discuss other matters. If, for example, they were prepared to talk about Czechoslovakia, and encourage us to use our good offices for a reasonable settlement, it would obviously be of great assistance. Is there any chance either of this, or of their being willing to talk seriously about disarmament? If there were, I should certainly feel it might be worth trying and we might then conceivably get to something not wholly unlike the general settlement we have always worked for. If there isn't—and I fear this will be your reply—I think the only thing we can do is to prevent our relations with them getting any worse than we can avoid, do the best we can at Prague to get Benes to accept the settlement that Henlein (on behalf of Hitler?) would accept, and hope that later on the way may be clear, if it should still seem desirable, to deal with the colonial issue.

HALIFAX

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, April 17, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

*Quot homines tot sententiae*: that truism is the drawback of democracy. In a totalitarian State there is but one man and his 'sententia' prevails even if it is a bad one; whereas, as the result of the divergency of opinions, a democracy is always in danger of falling between two stools or doing nothing at all. I am all for democracy but one must recognise its limitations.

What is defeatism? Is it to say that war sooner or later between Great Britain and Germany is inevitable? Or is it to say that peace can only be preserved if Germany is allowed to become one of the satisfied angels? I believe the latter; she may never be satisfied, but that is the risk we have got to face. I do not mean, when one talks of satisfying Germany, giving her a free hand. But I do mean basing one's policy towards her on moral grounds and not allowing oneself to be influenced by considerations about the balance of power or even the Versailles Treaty. We cannot win the battle for the rule of right versus might, unless and until our own moral position is unassailable.

I feel this very strongly about the Sudeten question. Living as they do in solid blocks on the German frontier they have, in my opinion, a moral right at least to self-administration and eventually to self-determination. It is morally unjust to compel this solid Teuton minority to remain subjected to a Slav central Government at Prague.

I have written a despatch (No. 324<sup>1</sup> of April 1st) which goes to you by this bag and which to a certain extent gives an answer to the questions in your letter to me of April 4th, which I have just received. As my return bag leaves in an hour or so I have not time to give a really considered reply to your enquiry as to whether

<sup>1</sup> No. 121.



Hitler would welcome our good offices with the Czechs or would be willing seriously to discuss armaments. To a certain extent, however, you will find the answers—as I see them—in the despatch above-mentioned. I may be over optimistic but I do believe that, once the Sudeten question is satisfactorily settled Hitler would be quite willing to talk seriously about disarmament. Czechoslovakia is the only real war-danger-spot: (Poland and the Corridor question should be amenable to negotiation). Once the danger-spot is removed, disarmament becomes a reality, even for the Germans.

As for our good offices, Hitler told me on March 3rd that he could not admit the right of other countries to intervene in the matter of German minorities any more than he would claim the right of Germany to intervene as between Northern and Southern Ireland. Nevertheless I am not quite sure that he would spurn our good offices if they were on the basis of Federation of a sort in Czechoslovakia and of the ultimate right of self-determination and if the acceptance by Germany of a settlement on that basis meant that we would be prepared to discuss the colonies again, coupled with disarmament.

If you could persuade Benes to accept in principle a solution on the above basis, I could easily and discreetly sound Hitler, through Ribbentrop, on the subject. The trouble is that, if we asked the Germans so to accept our good offices, we would be binding ourselves to reopen the colonial negotiations, and I wonder if English opinion is ripe for that.

One thing, however, I am certain of, and that is that it would be quite useless and indeed very dangerous to sponsor any Czech proposal which does not mean a radical reform of minority treatment on the basis of a State of nationalities and not of a National State: i.e. federation of a kind. In the interest of all Europe and Czechoslovakia above all, I think it is essential that Benes should make a declaration of his readiness in principle to solve the Sudeten problem on that basis as soon as possible. The details of the scheme could then be worked out in an atmosphere of calm and even leisure.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, April 13, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

In your letter of April 4th you raise the question as to how to get our conversations with Germany going again.

The difficulty is, as you say, twofold: (a) British public aversion to giving back colonies to the Nazis at all; and (b) giving them back without a *quid pro quo*.

The latter is the crux of the matter since, if Germany could offer us something concrete, the British public might recognise it as worth while. Yet I have always been very sadly alive to the disadvantage of basing that *quid pro quo* on the *status quo* in Central Europe. I was always convinced that Austria was bound to become part of Germany in some form sooner or later. That is why I begged His Majesty's Government not to instruct me specifically to mention Austria by name in my conversation with Hitler on March 3rd. Even Hitler could not guarantee that the

Austrian Nazis would not render a peaceful solution there impossible. Austria is now eliminated—and without bloodshed. Whatever the methods or the ethics, that is the fact. But there remains the kindred problem of the Sudetendeutschen and after that Danzig, a settlement with Poland and Memel. None of these are really critical issues at the moment, except the Sudeten. You ask whether, for the purpose of a general settlement, Hitler would 'encourage us to use our good offices for a reasonable settlement' with Czechoslovakia.

Put like that I would say that Hitler would not. He would at best merely ask what we regard as a 'reasonable settlement'. What would we reply? In my opinion, however little pleasure it gives me to express it, I submit that, unless we are prepared to say 'cultural autonomy and self-administration with eventual right to self-determination by plebiscite after a period of years if demanded, together with complete neutrality (i.e. no foreign alliances on the lines of Switzerland or Belgium)', it would be better to give no answer at all, but rather to ask Hitler what he considers a 'reasonable settlement' and then to decide whether it was such as we could recommend to Prague.

I am in this connection extremely apprehensive lest Benes may put up to you and the French Government proposals which you may be willing to back, *vis-à-vis* the German Government and which, I fear, will be doomed to failure. I do not believe that anything less than I have described above would stand the least chance of permanence and I should be lacking in honesty to you and in my duty to His Majesty's Government as I see it, were I to express any other opinion. Politics are the art of what is possible, not the enunciation of wishes; and in this age we cannot with safety or with moral satisfaction deny the right of self-determination in areas where the population lives in predominant majorities on the frontier of the State in which it may desire to be incorporated.

Moreover, if we are to bring Central Europe into our negotiations and peaceful solutions as opposed to forcible actions we should base our case on the moral principle of self-determination and on our readiness to ensure it.

That is the sum of the whole matter. Hitler might welcome our good offices, if they were avowedly on the basis I have outlined above: if they are not, he will certainly refuse them. If we thus offered a peaceful solution of the Sudeten question, Hitler might well be willing at the same time seriously to talk about disarmament, since the risk of war would undoubtedly thereby and thereafter recede into the background instead of being as now in the minds of all of us.

Admittedly it is a hornets' nest, for self-determination opens a number of other problems and in particular that of the Hungarian minorities. At the same time, it has advantages since, if once we could bind Germany down to support of the principle, she would have to admit it in the case of the Polish corridor and her support in future might also be invaluable in securing justice for a certain number of Magyars.

I fear this may not be helpful to you. Nevertheless I feel very strongly that if we are to use our weight in Central Europe, it must be on the basis of definite principles and not of balance of power or the hypothetical ultimate and sinister policies of Great Germany. Even if it means cutting down Czechoslovakia, I cannot but believe that it would be to her ultimate peace and advantage to be a homogeneous Slav state rather than to maintain by force within her frontiers unwilling blocks of Germans or even Poles and Hungarians. I presume we would not want to coerce South Ireland again. Already last century the Austrian Empire was out of date, yet in a sense Czechoslovakia to-day is a sort of miniature Austria, with

Slavs dominating instead of Germans. She is not a national State but a state of nationalities and she can only uphold her present centralised constitution by means of foreign alliances and by the system of the balance of power.

Unless I know the definite policy of His Majesty's Government as regards the Sudeten, it is difficult for me to take soundings here as I would like to do either with Ribbentrop or Göring.

Yours ever,  
NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 3, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

I am waiting with great impatience to hear what was decided with the French Ministers in London as regards Czechoslovakia.

I fear that I am unprincipled, but I must say that I love my country more than Czechs or Sudetendeutschen, or Austrians or even Schuschnigg, or Poles or even Frenchmen. And it distresses me to see how we throw away our opportunities for the sake of international mirages. I cannot say 'principles' for they are not always basically sound or straightforward enough for that.

My humble advice would be that before taking, as it seems that you contemplate, any steps at Berlin, we should first ascertain what arrangements Mussolini may make with Hitler on this subject. We shall greatly increase our chances of success if we can find it possible to work together with Italy in this matter. It would be a sort of first fruits of our Italian accord. France is the Czech advocate, and Germany that of the Sudeten. Italy and ourselves can better play than either of these the part of the honest and impartial intermediary.

I think, if I may say so, that you were wise to make your statement to the Germans and Italians about our staff conversations with the French. Ribbentrop was flattered, so far as the form was concerned, by what he described to me as your personal message to him through the German Chargé d'Affaires.<sup>1</sup> He was upset about the substance as indeed all Germans were, since they can never see any side of a question but their own. Their attitude generally was why these warlike preparations? since Germany has no intention whatever of aggressing France and no desire even to fight the Czechs—provided they can achieve their ends without. We should consequently not be surprised if Hitler tries to arrange corresponding staff talks between Italy and Germany.

Göring has fluttered the dovescotes here by a conversation which he had with the King of Sweden on his way through Berlin. He talked to His Majesty of pushing the Czechs back to Russia where they belong. There are two Görings; the swashbuckling conversationalist: and the one who gives assurances on his word of honour, as an officer and a responsible statesman about respecting Czech independence, etc. He has to be reminded of the latter when he talks too rantingly as the former. Nevertheless, it is an idea which is forming here if Benes refuses to see the writing on the wall.

If I may do so, I would suggest for your consideration that on some favourable occasion in the House of Commons or House of Lords we should say quite openly

<sup>1</sup> See No. 165.

that we have no intention of trying to hamper Germany's *legitimate* economic freedom of action in Central or Eastern Europe. I would not suggest this if I thought that we really could hamper it or if I did not realise that a nation of 75 millions must be allowed to expand economically somewhere. The French dog-in-the-manger attitude in this respect is not only futile but silly. The German papers made a good deal of fuss over the reports in the British press to the effect that the British and French Ministers were to discuss in London ways and means to block Germany's economic expansion eastwards. Of course, I do not mean that we should not do what we can to further our own trade and to prevent Germany from unfairly cutting us out. But it is, I submit, a mistake to give the impression that, since we cannot hem her in territorially (vide Austria), we must hem her in economically. I admit that personally I am only too glad to wish that she should look eastwards instead of westwards.

I only see one good point about the extra sixpence on the income-tax. It may possibly induce the British public to be in favour of an agreement with Germany which is aimed at removing it again.

Hitler says that after Italy he will not go abroad again. He regards his present visit as an artistic tour for the purpose of studying the architectural glories of Italy. The Florence visit is solely with this aim in view. One complication will be that Hitler goes as Head of the State, which puts him with the King of Italy and in a class above the Duce. I imagine, however, that the latter will see that he gets his rights, though it may give rise to some scrapping.

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

*Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)*

[C 11049/1941/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 12, 1938

My dear Henderson,

I have had more than one letter to thank you for and I am rather ashamed at not having done so before now, but you have told me that you did not expect regular answers and I have been, as you can guess, rather busy.

Your letters are most helpful in putting me in possession of how your mind works and in regard to the sort of background of the things with which we are dealing together. I shall very much look forward to having further news from you after you have seen Ribbentrop.

As I see this main business on which we are engaged, the hope of finding a peaceful solution does in great part depend upon the success with which we can get into Benes' head the idea that the Czechs must really go a very long way and into the Germans' head the idea that we are genuinely trying to make our good offices effective in Prague, but that, unless they are careful, they may quite easily drop a match into the magazine. And I think it is important, as you will have very much in your mind, that, whatever you and I may think about the ultimate lengths to which Benes may have to go or about the difficulty of really protecting Czechoslovakia if the Germans let themselves go in forcible measures, you should not in any conversation, official or private, let the impression be created that we and others should certainly sit by in all circumstances.

I saw your telegram<sup>1</sup> to the Office about what you should say to Ribbentrop

<sup>1</sup> No. 198.

regarding 'a comprehensive settlement', and I have just been on the telephone to Alec Cadogan, who told me the general line on which the Office reply had been drawn. I should have hoped that it might have been possible to have kept any discussion that you might have on pretty broad lines, aiming rather at convincing the Germans of our sincerity and of our recognition of the fact that no settlement can be reached without very substantial concessions on the part of the Czechoslovak Government, but, at the same time, avoiding our being drawn into expressions of opinion about the precise methods by which such settlement might be achieved.

I do not want to complicate your job by trying to duplicate the instructions that are raining upon you, and this is really intended to do no more than give you a general indication of how my own mind works. I do not suppose it is very different to your own.

The point that has always seemed to me of greatest difficulty is the question of Czech foreign policy and their relations with Russia, and on this I have always thought that, if the Czechs are to be asked at the point of the bayonet to denounce their Russian alliance, it would be practically impossible for them in that form to do it. On the other hand, I have always felt that, if one could succeed in lowering the temperature as regards the internal problem, the necessity for the external reinforcement represented by the Soviet connexion would *pro tanto* be diminished and might ultimately tend to fade out.

I should be very interested if you could succeed in discovering any impressions of the Italian visit. I will bear in mind what you say about Germany's 'legitimate economic freedom of action' in Central and Eastern Europe, and I certainly do not want to give the impression that we are anxious to effect an economic encirclement. I think, however, that there may be certain things that we can do, and ought to do, in the sense of helping these other countries economically in ways quite legitimate, which may have the effect of assisting them not to be completely dependent upon Germany for their economic existence.

Yours ever,  
HALIFAX

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax*

[C 11049/1941/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 19, 1938

Dear Secretary of State,

I felt a little easier in my mind after my talk with Ribbentrop.<sup>1</sup> I did not like to be too optimistic in my official telegrams but it was quite evident that the German Government in their own interest also desire a peaceful settlement of the Sudeten question and to work with us. For instance, it was Ribbentrop who asked me to see him a day sooner than I had intended in order to be able to report at once to Hitler who was leaving for Berchtesgaden the next morning. Also to make that report, since I could not see him till late in the evening, he put off a dinner he was attending. I mention this to show the German attitude towards our intervention in Prague—quite apart from Ribbentrop's own phrase of 'heartily welcoming' it (*herzlich begrüßen*). The fact is that they have confidence in you and the Prime Minister: and that in itself is a great asset at the moment.

<sup>1</sup> See No. 206.



It also may have its disadvantages since, if things do not turn out well, the deception will be all the greater. And unfortunately one of the worst of German failings—even though it is not confined to Germans—is to be unable to see any side of a question except their own.

Believe me or not, and anyway your department seems to have some doubts, I have not prejudiced the issue in any way with the German Government either as regards the 'State of nationalities' question or what we shall do in the event of trouble (the Prime Minister's statement on March 24th). I have kept the discussion on the broadest possible lines. I am, in fact, as I wrote to you a month ago, very much alive to the delicacy of our operation and indeed very apprehensive lest it carry us too far. It is events not individuals which are the danger: i.e. Germany forced to intervene militarily for the sake of a principle, France for the sake of honour and ourselves for the sake of sentiment or what not. And a war for the Sudeten would be quite the most senseless of undertakings. Whatever its outcome, if we desired to avoid its recurrence, we should have to remodel Czechoslovakia. Both she and we and the French have nothing to gain and much to lose. However sorry I am for the Czechs, peace is an end in itself and a whole which is greater than a part.

I have summed up the position as I see it in a Saving telegram<sup>2</sup> by this bag. I should have liked to come to London but I feel that one is on a volcano here which might erupt at any moment. I am seriously afraid lest, if Benes (and Heaven knows I appreciate his difficulties) tries to shillyshally or even gives the impression that he is shillyshallying, that control of events will be taken out of our hand by some serious incident. We cannot afford another Schuschnigg experience.

Be that as it may, you may rest assured that the Germans do not at all have the impression that Britain will sit still in all circumstances and that they do have confidence in our sincerity while fully realising that our advice to Prague has only been on the broadest lines. They are just as chary on this latter point as ourselves. Their line is that the responsibility is Henlein's and they are keeping their hands as free as I have told them that we are keeping ours.

Yours,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

<sup>2</sup> No. 234.

## APPENDIX II

### Herr Henlein's conversations in London, May 1938

#### (1) *Note of a Conversation with Sir R. Vansittart*<sup>1</sup>

[C 4505/1941/18]

A little while ago I received indirectly a feeler indicating that Herr Henlein would like to come to London and see me again, and also that he would like to renew and widen his contacts here. Before replying I consulted the Secretary of State and we both thought that it would be more than a pity to rebuff Herr Henlein's initiative and that it offered indeed the only chance of inducing him to moderate the extreme pretensions of his Carlsbad speech on which no peaceful solution would be possible. I said moreover that I thought it likely that he would not have wished to talk to me again at this moment unless the door was still open for reasonableness and an abatement of extreme claims. The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister both thought it would be wise to respond to his overture, and I accordingly let him know that I would be glad to see him if he came. At first he proposed to come over with quite a party, but I let him know that this would look too like a mission and that in such circumstances I should not be able to see him as the whole basis of this visit was a purely private one as between friends and had no official character. For the same reason I considered it impossible to arrange for Herr Henlein to be received by any member of the Government since that would certainly have upset the Czechoslovak Government. Indeed, when the Czechoslovak Minister in London heard that Herr Henlein was coming, he immediately came to the Foreign Office to say that he hoped Herr Henlein would not be received here. (Here, however, I may mention a pleasing feature of the visit. In previous years when Herr Henlein and I have met, the Czechoslovak Legation and Government had been inclined to be suspicious. This time when I told M. Masaryk that I was meeting Herr Henlein at dinner quite privately and that there was no question of his coming to the Foreign Office, M. Masaryk said that the visit caused him no disquiet whatever; indeed he welcomed it and was pleased to see it take place.)

Since, however, it was impossible for members of the Government to receive Herr Henlein lest some sort of negotiation be suspected, it was necessary to arrange that Herr Henlein should see not only myself but some persons of consequence in the House of Commons where he has already made some acquaintances during his previous visits. I therefore suggested that he might be seen by Mr. Churchill and Sir Archibald Sinclair, and I also suggested that Mr. Harold Nicolson, who was for long at our Embassy in Berlin and speaks German well (Herr Henlein speaks very little English), should invite a few members belonging to all parties to meet him at tea during his one day stay here.

I myself dined alone with Herr Henlein and Colonel Christie on the evening of the 13th, and we spent some four hours together. I questioned Herr Henlein upon his other contacts and conversations, and he appeared to have been pleased

<sup>1</sup> This note was made by Sir R. Vansittart. Copies of the report were sent by the Foreign Office to H.M. Missions at Berlin, Budapest, Paris, Prague, and Warsaw.

with them. There had been certain differences of opinion, but on the whole he felt that the conversations had been both frank and helpful. He had taken all that was said to him in very good part and felt that he had seen a good deal of various sections of British opinion. (He complained good-humouredly of the press and said that its attentions had nearly killed him. In that respect he greatly regretted the unnecessary, but he thought harmless, publicity that had attended his visit, for which he begged me to believe that he was in no wise responsible. Indeed, I may say that he behaved exceedingly well in that respect during his stay and gave no interviews or information.)

In my conversation with Herr Henlein I carefully avoided going into any precise details of the internal settlement, but concentrated on dealing with the factors which should facilitate one. I told Herr Henlein that I had of course noticed that he had of late been no longer ostensibly the moderate Henlein that I had known and appreciated in previous years but that I felt that he was now going too far and indeed some of his demands exceeded the bounds of the possible.

Herr Henlein of course in return pointed out how lamentably slow the Czech Government had been in making any advance; that he had always been the apostle of conciliation (and I hastened to assure him that I knew this to be true) but that his position had been rendered almost untenable by the fact that he had so long preached this doctrine without obtaining any appreciable result. 'I am continually put', he said, 'in the position of falling between two stools.' None the less I said that I felt sure I could still count upon him for an effort in the cause of reason and moderation if thereby a satisfactory settlement could be brought about. I pointed out to him that there was one new and hopeful feature in the situation. He was well aware of the advice that had been given in the past both officially and privately from the Foreign Office to Prague, but I could not have told him during that time exactly what language the French were holding. Now, though it might seem to him tardily, the French Government were acting on the same lines as ourselves, and it would indeed be a tragedy if at the very moment when, in consequence, the Czechoslovak Government made a full move, as I was sure they would do, he and his party correspondingly receded, whether of their own volition or under outside pressure.

Herr Henlein proceeded to express some scepticism as to the Czechoslovak intention of making serious offers, but I reiterated my conviction that these would be forthcoming, and at the same time I reverted to the question of French collaboration in the following connection. Herr Henlein had already said to me earlier in the evening when he was reciting a list of the grievances of his compatriots, of the recurrent incidents and his fear that one such incident might one day prove too large and start the flames, that what was above all necessary was a *quick* settlement. In that I said that I could not too heartily concur, but the worst way imaginable of getting one was to complicate the perfectly legitimate question of the rectification of the internal grievances of the Sudeten Deutsch by introducing the extraneous matter of foreign policy. Here of course we could not carry the French with us, for it would be nothing short of ludicrous to suppose that we could persuade the French to go with us to Prague and say 'Please get rid of us and the Russian connection as well.' I did not think that either of these connections should or could be brought into the matter. Czechoslovakia's foreign policy could not moreover be dictated by a minority, and no one would understand the attempt. Above all, and this was the most important point, the introduction of this extraneous matter would indefinitely retard a solution just at the moment when it might be

possible of attainment and so obviate the inflammatory incidents that Herr Henlein dreaded. I should say here that Herr Henlein in past years has always been very frank on the absolute necessity of the avoidance of war in the interests of his compatriots, for he has always been well aware that they would be the first to suffer in such case.

I went on to say that if it were possible really to concentrate on the internal issue only and leave policy out of account, altogether, it might be possible for him to get a very large measure of satisfaction without the risk of war, whereas insistence on demands obviously unacceptable *ab initio* might very conceivably bring war about. Herr Henlein quite recognised this and reiterated his earnest desire to avoid any dangerous impasse.

I went on to take another point in his programme, that is the adoption by his party of the Nazi Weltanschauung. I said that it would be quite unworkable to set up a Nazi State within the boundaries of a democratic State, that no one could approve such a disruptive fantasy and that other means must be found of satisfying his legitimate requirements. On this point also I thought as little as possible should be said if a speedy arrangement was to ensue. On this point Herr Henlein was naturally much more reserved. He is indeed obviously under considerable pressure in this regard, but here also I retained the general impression that I derived from the whole conversation, that I was, as in previous years, speaking to a wise and reasonable man.

Finally, I advised Herr Henlein to drop all mention of reparations. I said that the word had an ugly ring in our ears, and I should have thought would have had a still uglier one in any German ear. Quite apart from that, however, if negotiations once got bogged in the endless wrangles that would ensue from an impossible attempt to put the eggs back into the omelette, we should never get forward, and that was precisely what we must all wish to do. This also Herr Henlein took in very good part. He entirely saw the point and will, I am sure, not be unreasonable in regard to it.

In short, I may say that throughout these four hours of conversation I found Herr Henlein far more reasonable and amenable than I had dared to hope, and I am sure that he will desire to remain so unless he is too much interfered with by German pressure from across the border, for it is certain that there is a very strong party in Germany which would like to block any agreement and would stop at nothing to achieve this dead end. I made it clear to Herr Henlein that I knew he would have to contend with extremist pressure on both sides of the border, but I said that as an old friend I most earnestly desired to see him retain his position as leader of his own movement. (The Reichs-Germans are of course running Hans Krebs against him, and Krebs is not only an extremist but greatly disliked by Henlein.) And I added that I should regard it as a real international catastrophe if he were either over-run by his own extremists or reduced from across the border to the position of a Seyss-Inquart. I think he took the latter point.

We parted on as friendly terms as ever. He repeated again that he was still out for a policy of conciliation, but said most definitely two or three times that this would be the last possible occasion and that the move toward him must come quick for he could no longer confront his more extreme followers with nothing in hand. I told him that I was quite certain this would not be the case, and he left saying that if he found himself in difficulties and delays that were becoming too great for him to cope with he would find means of letting me know. He was evidently pleased by his visit, and I most certainly was, for if the situation created by it is



handled promptly and if the Germans will desist from blocking tactics, we may really have turned a crucial corner in European history.

Seeing how well the Czechoslovak Minister had taken the visit, I urged Herr Henlein most strongly to go and see M. Masaryk before he left England. He promised that he would do so, and spent an hour or two with him. I myself kept M. Masaryk informed in a general sense of how matters were developing, and begged him to use all his influence to induce his Government to move while Herr Henlein was still under the favourable impression of our conversations. M. Masaryk assured me on Sunday evening that he had already done so, and he is coming to see me again on Tuesday morning when, without compromising Herr Henlein (for it is most important that we should not do that), I shall be able to give him some additional reasons for expedition.

To sum up, I would say that this visit opens up distinct possibilities, but no more than possibilities, and the odds are still that pressure will be put on Herr Henlein from Berlin to drive him out of any feasible agreement. On the other hand, we have now a chance of counteracting such pressure if only the Czechoslovak Government will take its opportunity. If they do, we shall be helping both Herr Henlein and ourselves by putting really strong pressure on Berlin not to interfere with any acceptable solution, but it is certain that the pressure will have to be strong to be effective. I think it would be hard to over-rate the importance of endeavouring to exploit the present opportunity for what it is worth; since if for any reason the opening thus created could not be utilised, I fear that the day will be carried in Berlin by the party that aims at nothing but the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia with a view to facilitating Germany's eastward drive for which the complete domination of Europe is a prerequisite. If such a domination were established we should be confronted with a position which we have for centuries endeavoured to prevent with the instinctive knowledge that any lasting hegemony in Europe must of necessity reduce this country to a second-class Power. I feel, however, that there is now some slight chance of avoiding this fatal consummation by means other than the alternative method of preventing it which would probably mean a European war.

(Initialled). R. V.  
16th May, 1938

(2) *Note of a Conversation with Mr. Churchill and Sir Archibald Sinclair*<sup>1</sup>

[C 4386/1941/18]

Herr Henlein was challenged as to the meaning of his Carlsbad speech. He said that he claimed the right to profess the Nazi ideology, but he did not claim to impose it on others. On being told English anxiety was caused by the fear that he might be used as a pawn in Germany's 'Drang nach Osten', he insisted, and offered to give his word of honour that he had never received orders or even recommendations ('Weisungen') from Berlin.

He said the position in his country was intolerable, and gave instances, and was told he would have complete British sympathy in an endeavour to improve the position of his followers within the Czecho-Slovakian State. He said that the

<sup>1</sup> This note was sent to the Foreign Office with a covering letter by Mr. Churchill on May 15.



Czechs must no longer maintain that it was their State in which others were allowed to live, but accept the position that it was the common country of all the various races; and he insisted that the other minorities were just as dissatisfied as the Sudetendeutsche.

He was asked whether he claimed a veto, e.g. about the Czecho-Russian alliance regarding foreign policy. He said 'Certainly not.' He disapproved of this Pact, and claimed the right to advocate its rescission, but he did not consider this a 'sine qua non' for agreement. He said that it would be unthinkable, however, that Germans should be asked to fight Germans in support of Russia. He appeared to be attracted by the possibility of a guarantee by Britain and France to come to the assistance of Germany if she were attacked by Russia, as also by the suggestion that the Czecho-Russian Pact against German aggression might be extended on Locarno lines to a bi-lateral Pact made between Cz. and Germany against the possibility of Russian aggression.

On being pressed not only about his Carlsbad speech but about his speech a week later, when he said his demands at Carlsbad had been minimum demands not maximum demands, he said that this had been necessary because the Cz. newspapers had insisted that his Carlsbad demands had been merely put forward for electioneering purposes, and were bargaining points from which he was prepared to recede.

He realised that an incident between the Sudetendeutsche and the Czechs might easily set Europe alight, as if Germany marched, France would come in and England would follow. He was assured this was correct, and adjured to avoid incidents even though he might be in the right. He stated that an emissary of his had a discussion with the Cz. Minister in Paris, who had said there were certain circles amongst the Czechs who thought it would be a good thing to provoke an incident. They reckoned that Germany, knowing France and England were behind Prague, would not act, and this 'Ohnmachts probe' could be exploited to destroy the Sudetendeutsche party: he insisted on the danger of such a proceeding.

He said that in his view there were three possibilities: The first was some form of Autonomy within the Czecho State. The second was a plebiscite probably leading to the Anschluss. The third was war. His policy was to make a last attempt to arrive at agreement on some form of Autonomy, but it must be reached soon, and by agreement, as his followers were impatient, and undoubtedly at the moment would prefer the Anschluss. (He seemed to feel some sense of grievance that a minority statute was now being settled in Prague without any discussion or negotiation with his party).

If no settlement could be reached, he proposed to appeal to the Great Powers for a plebiscite to be held under International supervision, in which the three questions would be:

- (1) The maintenance of the status quo.
- (2) Autonomy.
- (3) The Anschluss.

Herr Henlein was asked whether he thought any agreement on Autonomy was possible which would not destroy the integrity of the Cz. State, and which would enable him and his followers to act as loyal members of the State prepared to defend it against aggression from whatsoever side it might come. He thought this should be quite feasible on the following lines:—

There should be a central Parliament in Prague, which should have control of foreign policy, defence, finance and communications. All parties should be

entitled to express their views there, and the Government would act on majority decisions. The frontier fortresses could be manned by Czech troops, who would of course have unhindered access thereto. The Sudetendeutsche regions, and possibly the other minority districts, should enjoy local autonomy; that is to say, they should have their own Town and County Councils, and a Diet in which matters of common regional concern could be debated within definitely delimited frontiers. He would be prepared to submit questions of fact, e.g. the tracing of the boundary, to an impartial tribunal, perhaps even appointed by the League of Nations. All parties would be free to organise and offer themselves for election, and impartial Courts of Justice would function in autonomous districts. The officials, i.e. postal, railway and police officers, in the German-speaking regions, would of course be German-speaking, and a reasonable proportion of the total taxes collected should be returned to these regions for their administration.

M. Masaryk who was afterwards informed of this conversation professed himself contented with a settlement on these lines.

## APPENDIX III

Summarized translations of two memoranda presented by the representatives of the Sudeten German party to the Czechoslovak Government during the negotiations in June, and observations on the state of these negotiations supplied to H.M.G. by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*First Memorandum<sup>1</sup> by the Sudeten German Representatives*

[C 5922/1941/18]

### I.

The democratic Constitution of the State should remain undisturbed in its guiding principles, but it must be adapted to realities on the following bases:—

(1) Equality of rights for individuals is not enough. It must be extended to the national groups ('Kollektiva').

(2) If all power proceeds from the people ('Volk'), then it must be provided that the whole population without exception should possess *ad hoc* independent organs through which it can make known the sovereign will of its race ('Volk'). Only thus is it possible in a State of several races to avoid the present system of a governing race and governed races.

(3) In a State of several races the deciding elements cannot be the political parties nor the Government a coalition of parties, but the natural constituents are the races and racial groups, which as legal personalities must have corresponding rights and duties.

(4) If the federal system is rejected for a State of several races, the State can only be organised on this natural basis of races and racial groups if all matters which concern the individual race as a cultural, social and national unit are entrusted to it (self-administration). Clearly legal formulæ must be found over and above this to secure that the individual races and racial groups should share equally in the common administration of the State.

(5) As, however, the area in which it lives, works and must develop belongs to each race, that area as it stood when the State was founded must be assigned to it for self-administration. Inhabitants of other race must be politically safeguarded by mutual guarantees and entrusted to the care of their nationality ('Volkstum'), according to the personal principle in the most sensitive national interests (schools, education, &c.).

(6) The races and racial groups thereby obtain their fundamental rights, *e.g.*:—

(a) Liberty and guarantee of self-determination and of equal opportunity for development.

(b) Equal and appropriate share in the governing of the State.

(7) Self-administration must not be a privilege for one race, but must equally apply to all.

(8) The organisation of racial self-administration facilitates a long over-due decentralisation of the administration on a natural basis and also a reform of the

<sup>1</sup> This, together with the second memorandum, was transmitted to the Foreign Office by Mr. Newton in his despatch No. 206 of June 15. See No. 415.

public administration generally, as well as a democratisation through the introduction of lay elements into the Administration.

(9) To facilitate the smooth introduction of the new system, a commission, equally drawn from both sides ('paritätische'), should be set up to define the material as well as territorial limits of competence.

(10) The races and racial groups should be administered only by officials of their own races in their own territory and in their special national affairs. The common State institutions should, moreover, be composed in all ranks according to the national percentages.

(11) The races and racial groups should have their proportionate share of all public expenditure, and a decisive voice in its employment in their own territory and in respect of their racial affairs.

## II.

The preceding principles could be broadly realised as follows:—

(1) The organisation of racial self-administration must, in all matters of a personal nature which can be administered in this way, embrace all members of the race. From the territorial aspect it must embrace the whole racial territory.

(2) The powers of the municipalities ('Gemeinden') must be restored to what they were in 1918 and extended according to subsequent modern developments.

(3) The organisation of self-administration is further based first on the district, secondly on the autonomous provincial self-administration and, finally, on the National Diet ('Volkstag') with the president of the self-administration. The organs of self-administration are democratically elected as follows: For the district a district assembly, a district committee and a prefect. The National Diet is composed of the elected parliamentary representatives of the members of the race. These elect the president of the national self-administration, and at the same time form the National Curia ('Kurie') in the National Assembly of the State. They have the right of passing laws in execution of the State laws and the right of direct legislation on matters assigned to the self-determination of the nationalities. They have also the right of summoning the constitutional court and certain further essential rights. The president of the national self-administration is *ex officio* member of the Government, and the self-administration is thus incorporated in the united Government of the State through the National Diet as National Curia of Parliament and the president of the self-administration as national Minister.

(4) The State administration remains where necessary subject to division into national sections or to reform. The same applies to all common institutions. It would be desirable to consider a reform whereby the duties of the State in the districts were delegated to the national district self-administrations. They would come within the competence of the political provincial officials in second instance, and beyond that within that of the competent Ministries.

(5) The whole existing legislation will, of course, be examined and, where necessary, revised in accordance with the principles laid down in I and II above.

### *Second Memorandum by the Sudeten German Representatives*

[C 5922/1941/18]

#### *I.—The Creation of an Equality of Rights*

The development during the last twenty years within the State has failed to create an equality of rights such as is the basis of every democratic Constitution,

either for individuals or for the national groups. On such equality depends the peaceful association of the national groups.<sup>1</sup> It presupposes not only the formal equality of individuals before the law but also constitutional principles, recognising that not only individuals but also national groups may not be deprived of their rights through the supremacy of a single nation. A reconstitution of the fundamental elements of the State is therefore essential.

## II.—*Guarantee of the Principle of Popular Sovereignty ('Volkssouveränität')*

The only source of power in the State is the sovereign people, which is made up of the various national groups in the State. The Czech nation, the German and other national groups are the fundamental elements of the 'sovereign people' and must each be given a legal personality. They must therefore obtain organs to represent them where they can decide their own affairs and through which they can take part in the common affairs of the State. Each juristically recognised national group ('*Volkspersönlichkeit*') must necessarily include all members of that group living in the State.

The juristically recognised national groups must have rights and liberties, corresponding to civil rights and liberties, both towards each other and towards the State as the common legal union. These fundamental rights of the national groups must be (a) freedom of self-determination, of equal opportunity for development of all the capacities and talents of each national group; (b) a proportionate share for each national group in the leadership, formation and activities of the State; (c) protection against denationalisation; (d) guarantee of non-restricted national confession ('*völkisches Bekenntnis*') and of the right to foster national unity ('*Zusammengehörigkeit*').

## III.—*The National Regional Reorganisation*

These principles demand the reorganisation of the country in the sense of national regional decentralisation. As a territorial area as well as a population belongs to a State, so must every recognised national group be accorded a territorial sphere of activity. State territory must therefore be subdivided into Czech, German, Slovak, &c., national areas. This would involve the redemarcation of all areas in accordance with the national frontiers for all public affairs, including all kinds of State enterprises. Enclaves must similarly be demarcated in order to form self-contained administrative areas. For citizens of another nationality in the national areas reciprocal minority rights must be introduced. In demarcating the national frontiers the compensation of the German national group for the losses sustained since 1918 must be carried through. The demarcation must be effected by a commission on which the national groups concerned are equally ('*paritätisch*') represented.

## IV.—*Application of these Principles of Reorganisation in Legislation and Administration*

Legislation and administration must be divided between the organs of the State and the organs of the self-administration of the national groups. The German and Czech national groups must each be able to decide collectively their national and territorial needs and interests. The sphere of activities of the municipalities must be restored to its 1918 extent and for certain purposes enlarged. The sphere of activities of national self-administration must at least include:—

<sup>1</sup> *Note in the original:* The German text says 'nations and national groups'. For simplicity the summary translates this here and elsewhere as 'national groups' *tout court*.



(1) The independent and enlarged sphere of activities of the municipalities (with financial powers), including the alteration of place names and of municipal boundaries.

(2) Police and organisation ('Vereinswesen'), the right of dissolution being reserved to the State.

(3) The national register of assessments.

(4) Alteration of names.

(5) The complete educational system, including para-military training.

(6) The complete cultural system, including scientific academies, care of monuments, wireless and censorship.

(7) Social services, including sickness insurance, employment exchanges and labour services, &c.

(8) Health administration, hospitals, eugenic policy, &c.

(9) Old age pensions.

(10) Settlement, building and land transfer.

(11) Public buildings, maintenance of local roads, administration of public enterprises and contracts within the framework of the provisions made for such purposes in the national share of the State and provincial budgets.

(12) The self-administration of economic, social and professional interests (chambers of commerce, &c., including the right to form new chambers, for example, for press, films, &c.). The right to form associations of all kinds for economic and social purposes.

(13) Trade matters, markets, theatres, including their police inspection.

(14) Local electricity enterprises.

(15) Local public finance and banking matters.

(16) Agriculture and forestry matters.

(17) Self-administration of the financial quotas for the activities of self-administration.

(18) In addition, right to tax and raise loans for autonomous activities.

(19) Statistical enquiries.

Items (3), (4), (5), (6) and (8) apply to all members of the national group living in the State; similarly as regards the application of the financial quotas. The other items apply to the national area. The conclusion of State treaties, for example, for matters mentioned in items (7), (8) and (16) will remain the function of the National Assembly and of the Government.

#### V.—*Distribution of Legislative Powers*

Legislation will be effected through:—

(1) The National Assembly.

(2) The National Diets ('Volkstage').

The electoral system will need to be modified so as to place the electoral rights of the national groups on a proportional basis, and the Senate will eventually have to be abolished. Members of the National Assembly of the same national group will form National Curias. They will represent in the common National Assembly the legal personalities and common demands of their national groups. The National Assembly shall be able to legislate in all matters which are not reserved to self-administration and also in matters of principle affecting items (5), (6), (8), (9), (11), (13), (14) and (16) in paragraph IV above. In order to create national equality of rights the procedure, for example, for the composition of the Prime Minister's Office, the use of languages, interpellations, &c., must be amended.

The National Diets will be composed of the members of the National Curias in the National Assembly. They will be competent to legislate in matters appertaining to national self-administration; to elect the president of the self-administration; to pass a vote of censure against the directorate of the self-administration; they will have budgetary rights over financial quotas and their own resources; right of criminal proceedings against the President of the Republic and members of the Government; right to hold a plebiscite on the motion of the president of the self-administration. They will have control of legislation both politically and, by means of the Constitutional Court as a result of a motion of the National Assembly, juridically. They will have the right of initiation for the introduction of legislation in the National Assembly.

#### VI.—*Re-organisation of the Executive Authorities*

##### 1. *Government and State Executive Authority.*

(a) The President of the Republic. (b) The Government.

The latter will be composed, as at present, of the President of the Council and the Ministers. The presidents of the self-administrations will be *ex officio* members of the Council of Ministers and will be thereby independent of the confidence of the National Assembly.

##### 2. *The Executive Organs in the Self-administration.*

The highest organ of the self-administration will consist of the president of the self-administration ('Vorsitzender der Selbstverwaltung') and of the heads ('Leiter') of the higher self-administration departments, who will together compose the directorate of the self-administration. The president will be elected by the National Diet for six years, his appointment being confirmed by the President of the Republic. If this confirmation is refused, the National Diet can move that his appointment should be persisted in. The heads of the higher self-administration departments will be nominated by the president (of the self-administration). The president and the heads ('Leiter') will be responsible to the National Diet. The president will be, *ex officio*, a member of the Council of Ministers. He will be a political Minister and member of the Superior Council for State Defence.

#### VII.—*Re-organisation of Administration*

##### (A) *State Administration*

##### 1. *Central Authorities.*

(a) The Ministries of Education, Social Welfare and Health will be dissolved, since these matters will be taken over by the self-administration. Matters of common concern and State right of supervision will be taken over by a special section of the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry for Unification will also be dissolved as superfluous.

(b) In the Chancery of the President of the Republic, in the Prime Minister's Office, and in the Ministries of the Interior, Justice, Trade, Agriculture, Public Works, Railways and Posts, national sections with officials of the nationality concerned will be set up.

(c) In the Ministries of National Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance, national sections will not be set up, though in the two latter arrangements must be made to represent the particular economic interests of the individual national areas.

##### 2. *The Administrative Authorities.*

The subordinate administrative authorities must be reformed on the same principles.

## (B) *The Administrative Authorities of the Self-administration*

### 1. *The Higher Authorities.*

At the head will be the directorate with its president elected by the National Diet. This directorate will consist of the president and heads of the higher administrative departments. The latter will be created for the various branches of self-administration, for example, one for school affairs, another for social services, &c. The regulations for the application of laws passed by the self-administration will be issued by the directorate.

### 2. *The Lower Authorities.*

The lower authorities of the self-administration will form part of the autonomous provincial and district ('Bezirk') authorities.

(a) The autonomous provincial administration will be directed by the elected provincial Governor. He will be advised by the (national) provincial council and by the (national) provincial committee.

(b) The autonomous districts ('Bezirke') will be directed by the elected prefects ('Bezirkshauptmann'), who will be advised by the elected district committees.

Appeal against the decisions of the self-administration authorities can be made to special national sections of the Constitutional Court.

## VIII.—*The Reform of the Status of Civil Servants*

Corresponding to the division of administration into State and autonomous administrations, the category of autonomous civil servants will be once more introduced. State civil servants of the higher grades and, where national sections have been set up, also of the lower grades, must be of the nationality of the area in which they are working, so that only German civil servants will be employed in German areas. In the central administration, where no national sections are set up, proportionality must be enforced, regard being paid to exceptional circumstances. The president of the self-administration is to have a say in the nomination of the leading officials in the national sections.

Civil servants of the organs of the self-administration will come under dispensations similar to those of the State civil servants. Disciplinary matters will be the charge of a separate organisation under the president of each self-administration, who will also propose to the President of the Republic senior appointments and be entitled to make such appointments if the president withholds his signature to the commission.

## IX.—*Organisation of Justice*

The sphere of competence of the district and parish courts must be redefined in accordance with the national areas. In the higher courts and in the Higher Constitutional Court national sections will be introduced. A special court will be created to adjudge disputes of competence between the self-administration and the State administration.

## X.—*Principles of the New Language Law*

In the sphere of State administration and State enterprise the following principles must be applied:—

1. The State speaks the language of its citizens.
2. The higher authorities speak the languages of the lower authorities.
3. Authorities of equal competence speak their own individual language.

4. The language of the authorities situated entirely in a national area must be the language of that area.

5. Similar principles must be applied for State enterprises and corporations, associations and institutions.

In the sphere of self-administration the authorities must speak the language of the national group concerned. In minority areas reciprocal minority language rights must be created.

Other State functionaries, such as notaries, civil engineers, &c., must speak their national language in their relations with the authorities and in their relations with their clients the language of the individual.

For Prague particular regulations must be introduced to mark the fact also outwardly that it is the common capital of all the national groups.

### XI.—*Special Questions*

The following institutions and organisations must be reformed on similar principles:—

State banks (National Bank, Post Office Savings Bank, &c.); financial institutions and export, economic and social organisations; Czechoslovak Press Bureau and *Radio Journal*; State monopolies, &c. The Germans must have a say in the field of foreign exchange administration.

### XII.—*Principles of Financial Organisation*

The State budget is the backbone of every well-ordered administration and national justice must therefore be applied to it. A Finance Law must be put into force which will be unalterable except with the agreement of the national groups. The following must be its principles:—

The State estimates shall be divided up on a national basis in accordance with a key agreed on between the National Curias of the National Assembly and confirmed by the President of the Republic. Should the National Curias not agree, budgetary provision shall be provided by the Government by decree. In deciding the key, account must be taken of the particular circumstances of any national group, and of the necessity of compensating the German national group for damage suffered.

Pending the reform of the taxation system, the State budget shall include the sums necessary for purposes of self-administration. These shall be voted *en bloc* and allotted to the national self-administrations to apply as they think fit. The balance of accounts for these sums shall be communicated by the national Ministers to the National Assembly. The allocation of State contracts must conform to the national key. A special national control office must be set up to ensure respect of the key. A special parliamentary control commission must be set up, its competence also including the so-called secret expenditure.

Similar principles shall govern provincial budgets and accounts.

### XIII.—*Legislative Application*

This reform of the State in accordance with the principles and demands stated must be anchored in a comprehensive legislative corpus, by the introduction of constitutional or ordinary laws, so that it will not be possible to alter it by a majority of votes.

#### XIV.—*Compensation*

Special legislative and administrative measures must be enforced for the compensation of the damage suffered by the German national group in so far as this is not already covered by the foregoing proposals, and in particular in respect of the following matters: land reform, university legislation, minority schools, &c.

#### *Memorandum by the Czechoslovak Government<sup>1</sup> (Received June 25)*

[C 6299/1941/18]

*Informations confidentielles sur l'état actuel des négociations entre le Gouvernement Tchécoslovaque et les groupes nationalitaires (notamment le parti des Sudètes)*

#### I

Le mémorandum du parti des Allemands des Sudètes qui renferme l'ensemble de ses revendications n'a été présenté au Gouvernement de la République Tchécoslovaque que mercredi le 8 juin courant. Le Gouvernement l'a soumis immédiatement à un examen très détaillé et, en laissant de côté la partie théorique qui, en réalité, s'inspire de conceptions du national-socialisme pur, il a constaté qu'il contient, au fond, treize points dont on peut résumer les principales revendications concrètes comme suit:

- 1) Reconnaissance aux nations et groupes ethniques de l'égalité des droits accordés jusqu'à présent seulement aux individus et reconnaissance des nations et des groupes ethniques comme sujets de droit.
- 2) Subdivision du territoire de l'État en régions nationalitaires et nouvelle délimitation des districts.
- 3) Élargissement de l'autonomie administrative en commençant par les communes.
- 4) Constitution, en organes spéciaux, des membres de l'Assemblée Nationale appartenant à la même nationalité ethnique, organes qui, sous le nom de "Volksvertretung", représenteraient les nations et les groupes ethniques respectifs et auxquels serait dévolue une partie du pouvoir législatif, réservé jusqu'à présent à l'Assemblée Nationale.
- 5) Une organisation complètement nouvelle du gouvernement (sous forme d'une réforme du pouvoir exécutif) et création d'organes exécutifs centraux des nations et groupes ethniques, complètement distincts du gouvernement central.
- 6) Suppression de certains ministères, par exemple de l'Instruction Publique, création de sections nationalitaires dans certains autres, création d'offices centraux dans le domaine de l'autonomie administrative et d'organes délibératifs et consultatifs pour les circonscriptions inférieures.
- 7) Introduction du principe de la proportionnalité nationalitaire pour l'admission des fonctionnaires et des employés à tous les emplois publics et attribution de postes dans les régions allemandes aux employés et fonctionnaires de nationalité allemande.
- 8) Réorganisation de la justice (nouvelle délimitation des circonscriptions judiciaires de première et de deuxième instance, création de sections nationalitaires près les Tribunaux supérieurs et suprêmes).

<sup>1</sup> This memorandum was communicated to Mr. Newton by the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs and transmitted to the Foreign Office on June 23, under cover of despatch No. 216. See No. 436.



- 9) Réforme de la législation sur l'emploi des langues.
- 10) Représentation des nationalités dans les institutions centrales économiques, financières, sociales, d'Hygiène publique, d'Assurances etc.
- 11) Établissement du budget et contrôle de son exécution suivant le barème des nationalités.
- 12) Mise en œuvre de ces principes et réformes au moyen de lois.
- 13) Réparation des préjudices subis à partir de 1918 (par la réforme agraire, les lois universitaires, la politique scolaire, l'assainissement des banques, etc.).

## II

Au sujet du mémorandum allemand, il y aurait lieu de faire remarquer ceci:

1. *Il se caractérise par les traits suivants:*

(a) Il est rédigé en termes corrects et essaie de rester sur le terrain des réalités, bien qu'on y retrouve certaines revendications extrémistes qui en affaiblissent la valeur politique et juridique et qui dans aucun cas ne peuvent être réalisées;

b) tout en se basant sur les conceptions fondamentales d'un système juridique spécial (national-socialiste), il représente un ensemble juridique et politique assez homogène, mais entièrement contraire, au fond, au système démocratique tchécoslovaque;

2. *Toutefois, il soulève les objections suivantes:*

a) Il touche aux fondements mêmes de la Constitution de la République, en portant atteinte à ses dispositions les plus importantes et en proposant une reconstruction fondamentale de l'État dont la discussion exigerait à elle seule de longs mois, sinon des années entières;

b) au fond, il construit sur l'idéologie nationale-socialiste, en opposition avec l'idéologie démocratique de la République;

c) il marque une tendance à désagréger l'unité territoriale de l'État;

d) en proposant la création de *tout un système très compliqué d'institutions et d'offices de la 'Selbstverwaltung'*, il vise à donner à l'Administration de l'État *une organisation si enchevêtrée* qu'elle ne pourrait jamais fonctionner de façon satisfaisante, étant ineffective, impraticable et, au fond, dans son intégralité, absolument inapplicable.

e) ce qu'il propose *ne pourrait pas être appliqué à des groupes ethniques qui sont numériquement très faibles*, comme les Polonais, les Roumains, les Ruthènes de Slovaquie et les Israélites; or, l'État ne peut pas faire de distinction entre ses divers groupes ethniques;

f) il formule certaines revendications qui ne sauraient être mises en harmonie avec nos conceptions démocratiques, en proposant par exemple:

aa) que les présidents de la 'Selbstverwaltung' des groupes ethniques soient *de jure*, c'est-à-dire automatiquement membres du Gouvernement central et non responsables (!) devant l'Assemblée Nationale centrale, à la différence des autres membres du Gouvernement qui seraient nommés par le Président de la République et responsables devant le Parlement;

bb) que si le Président de la République ne procède pas dans les 30 jours qui suivent la présentation des propositions faites par les présidents de la 'Selbstverwaltung', à la nomination des fonctionnaires, son droit de nomination se trouve dévolu par ce fait même aux présidents de la 'Selbstverwaltung';

cc) que les ministères de l'instruction Publique, de la Prévoyance sociale et de l'Hygiène publique soient supprimés;

dd) en proposant une organisation de l'Enseignement allemand telle qu'elle

ouvrirait les voies à la propagation de l'idéologie nationale-socialiste (introduction par exemple de la clause arienne en droit ou en pratique) etc. etc.

g) il vise à instituer un système dont la réalisation présuppose l'affaiblissement le plus complet des attributions de l'État (et non pas seulement du pouvoir exécutif central) à la différence des tendances qui se font jour dans les États autoritaires, le memorandum manifeste la tendance à affaiblir dans sa cohésion l'État démocratique.

### III

Malgré ces difficultés et ces graves objections, les discussions qui ont eu lieu jusqu'à présent au sein de la majorité gouvernementale sur les revendications mentionnées ci-dessus, ont révélé la possibilité d'un accord sur un bon nombre de questions au sujet desquelles le Gouvernement en est arrivé à la conviction qu'une suite favorable pourrait leur être donnée.

En somme, une solution satisfaisante ou presque satisfaisante pourra être trouvée aux principales revendications figurant aux points 7 à 13. Ce qui équivaut à dire que le Gouvernement, en ce qui concerne l'admission des fonctionnaires et des employés dans les services publics, se propose d'adopter le principe de la proportionnalité nationalitaire; qu'il est prêt à procéder à une large réforme de la législation sur l'emploi des langues; qu'il envisage, en ce qui concerne les postes importants pour la vie culturelle, économique et sociale des nationalités, l'établissement du budget et le contrôle de son exécution suivant le barème des nationalités; qu'il est disposé à accorder aux nationalités une représentation équitable dans les institutions centrales économiques, financières, sociales, d'Hygiène publique et d'Assurances; qu'il étudie la question de la réparation des prétendus préjudices là où l'on pourrait les déterminer et en réaliser la réparation, ce qui, semble-t-il, ne serait possible que dans les questions scolaires; qu'il se propose de procéder à toutes ces réformes au moyen de dispositions légales, parmi lesquelles figureront également des dispositions destinées à empêcher la dénationalisation et d'autres établissant la responsabilité des organes d'État pour violation des droits nationalitaires.

Il est donc possible de s'attendre à ce qu'un grand nombre de revendications nationalitaires d'importance fondamentale reçoivent leur satisfaction.

Quant aux autres points, on cherche en ce moment les voies de compromis pour leur donner satisfaction dans une mesure appréciable qui ne compromettrait pas l'unité de l'État et les principes fondamentaux de la démocratie tchécoslovaque.

En effet:

1. Sans pouvoir adhérer à la thèse nationale-socialiste relative aux groupes ethniques comme sujets de droit, le Gouvernement est prêt à admettre les groupes ethniques au bénéfice de la protection légale en tant qu'individualités collectives.

2. Pour ce qui est de l'autonomie scolaire et culturelle, le Gouvernement est en train de rechercher sous quelle forme elle pourrait être accordée dans une plus grande mesure.

3. En ce qui concerne l'attribution, aux fonctionnaires et employés, de postes dans les régions mixtes, le Gouvernement s'applique à examiner, quel est le pourcentage des postes pouvant y être attribués aux fonctionnaires et employés allemands. Par contre, il ne saurait être donné satisfaction à la revendication réclamant que dans certaines régions il n'y ait que des fonctionnaires et employés de nationalité allemande et dans certaines autres que des fonctionnaires et employés de nationalité ethnique tchécoslovaque.

4. Il n'est guère possible de créer dans tous les ministères des sections nationales, mais, d'autre part, il est bien possible d'admettre que dans les ministères il soit attribué un nombre suffisant de postes aux fonctionnaires et employés nationaux qui seraient chargés des affaires intéressant les nationalités respectives.

5. Quant à la question de la 'Selbstverwaltung', le Gouvernement cherche les moyens de la réaliser dans la plus grande mesure compatible avec l'unité de l'État. Dans cet ordre d'idées, le Gouvernement examine les modalités d'une décentralisation administrative importante ainsi que d'un élargissement de l'autonomie dans les communes, dans les districts et, le cas échéant, dans les provinces (Bohême, Moravie, Slovaquie), afin de faire passer, autant que possible, dans la propre compétence des nationalités une certaine partie de ce qui, à l'heure actuelle, dans le domaine de la soi-disante 'Selbstverwaltung', se trouve réservé aux administrations centrales. Vu que les discussions sur cette question ne sont pas encore terminées, il n'est pas possible d'entrer dans les détails, mais, d'autre part, on peut dire dès maintenant que le Gouvernement est prêt à aller dans ce domaine plus loin que ce n'était son intention au moment de la remise du premier mémorandum sur la politique des nationalités aux Gouvernements français et britannique.

## APPENDIX IV

### Foreign Office Memorandum on the possibility of neutralising Czechoslovakia

[C 5235/1941/18]

[This memorandum was sent on June 9 to Sir E. Phipps, Sir N. Henderson, and Mr. Newton with the comment that it was 'only a tentative draft which has been prepared to assist us in clearing our own minds and it does not in any way represent a considered and approved line of policy'.]

#### I

Mr. Newton's despatch No. 107<sup>1</sup> of the 12th April emphasised that in the present tension between Czechoslovakia and Germany Czechoslovakia's foreign relations constituted a factor as important as, if not more important than, does the position of the Sudeten minority. Czechoslovakia is at present bound to France by her treaty of the 16th October, 1925 (which pledges each party to come to the immediate assistance of the other in the event of unprovoked attack), and to the U.S.S.R. by the mutual assistance agreement of the 16th May, 1935. Russia's guarantee of Czechoslovakia only comes into force provided France has also come to the assistance of that country. In consequence of these two treaties she is regarded by Germany as forming part of an anti-German *bloc* and one of Germany's main requirements for a permanent settlement of her relations with Czechoslovakia would be the abandonment of the latter's alliance with the U.S.S.R. No such demand has yet been put forward in respect of the treaty with France, but this might well follow at a later stage. Czechoslovakia's alliances with France and Russia constitute, however, her only protection against the certainty of German domination and she could not therefore be expected to abandon them of her own free will unless she were offered something in exchange. The immediate problem is, therefore, to find some face-saving and, if possible, also effective device by which Czechoslovakia could, without humiliation, abandon the alliances which form Germany's main grievance against her, and which would also be agreeable to her two allies, France and the U.S.S.R. A possible solution would seem to lie in some form of neutralisation, under which Czechoslovakia would receive a combined guarantee in place of the present guarantee of France and the U.S.S.R. to come to her assistance in case of unprovoked aggression. There is reason to believe that such a solution might be acceptable to France as it would enable her to escape from her present dilemma of having to choose between dishonouring her obligations or fighting a war under unfavourable circumstances in aid of Czechoslovakia.

#### II

##### *Forms of Neutralisation*

Before considering possible schemes for Czechoslovakia it is convenient to consider what 'neutralisation' consists of and previous examples of this status.

(A) The elementary form of neutrality—so elementary, indeed, that there is no modern example of it—would consist in the neutralised State giving to certain States the necessary undertakings to maintain neutrality in the case of war, but

<sup>1</sup> No. 140.

in return these States would merely give undertakings not to infringe its independence or integrity, but would not guarantee to defend this independence or integrity against third parties.

(B) A full and complete neutralisation of a State<sup>2</sup> consists of the following elements:—

(1) The neutralised State binds itself never to take arms against any other State, except for defence against attack, and never to enter into such international obligations as would be likely indirectly to lead it into a war. It therefore precludes itself from entering into any obligations to assist any other State if that State is attacked or committing it to any action in case of war between other Powers inconsistent with the observance of perfect neutrality. It also binds itself to defend the integrity of its territory against attack and never to cede any of its territory.<sup>3</sup> These obligations are undertaken in a multilateral treaty with a certain number of other States comprising, in particular, Great Powers who are neighbours and interested in its neutrality. It also enshrines these obligations in its Constitution, so that in terms of municipal law any treaty or act concluded or done by its Government in contravention of these obligations may be unconstitutional and invalid.

(2) The other States in whose favour the undertakings by the neutralised State are given bind themselves never to infringe the territorial integrity of the neutralised State or its neutrality in case of war.

(The effect of (1) and (2) is to give any of the other States parties to the arrangement a release from its obligations to respect and a right of intervention if the neutralised State fails to implement (1).)

(3) Some or all of the States in whose favour the undertakings referred to in (1) are given guarantee the neutralisation by undertaking severally towards the neutralised State and each other to resist by arms any infringement of the territorial integrity of the neutralised State or violation of its neutrality by any other State whatever.

(C) Another form of neutralisation considerably less effective, consists of the same elements as those described above, except that the guarantee under (3) is a joint one and not a several one, so that according to the view which His Majesty's Government have expressed in the past, but which is not universally accepted, there is no obligation on a guarantor State to intervene to protect the neutralised State unless all the guarantor States also act, and therefore the guarantee does not operate if the violation is committed by one of the guarantor States.

(D) A fourth form, which perhaps can hardly be said to merit the title 'neutralisation', arises where the 'neutralised State' adopts unilaterally the policy set out in (1) as a permanent policy or where, independently of the unilateral adoption of this policy, certain State or States undertake unilateral pledges of non-aggression and the guarantees set forth in the sense of (2) and (3).

#### *Examples of Neutralisation*

Belgium, between 1831 and 1919, was an example of (B). Under article 7 of a treaty of the 19th April, 1839, between Holland and Belgium it is provided that '*Belgium shall be an independent and perpetually neutral State. She shall be obliged to*

<sup>2</sup> *Note in the Original:* The neutralization of a State is to be distinguished from the neutralization or demilitarization of a piece of the territory of a State.

<sup>3</sup> *Note in the Original:* It may bind itself *not* to maintain troops or fortresses (*vide* Luxembourg).



observe this neutrality towards all other States.' Under article 1 of treaties signed the same day<sup>4</sup> between the United Kingdom, Austria-Hungary, France, Prussia, and Russia, and (a) Belgium and (b) Holland, the five Powers declared that all the articles of the treaty between Holland and Belgium should be considered as if included in the latter two treaties and '*were thus placed under the guarantee of the five Powers*'. This was interpreted as a *several* guarantee involving the obligation to go to war to protect Belgian neutrality and therefore the United Kingdom made war against Germany in August 1914.

After the war, article 31 of the Treaty of Versailles contemplated the abrogation of the treaty of 1839 neutralising Belgium, but this has never been formally effected. Belgium did, however, in fact cease to be a neutralised State, because she became a member of the League of Nations without any qualification of her obligations under article 16, which is inconsistent with neutralisation, and also as a party to the Treaty of Locarno, which is also inconsistent with any such status.

Since the repudiation of the Locarno Treaty by Germany in 1936 Belgium has moved back towards neutrality, and in April 1937 Great Britain and France released Belgium from her obligations towards them, resulting from the Treaty of Locarno, while maintaining their own undertakings of assistance to Belgium. The Belgian Government for her part remains bound by its obligations under the League Covenant and has declared its intention to defend its own territory against aggression. In October 1937 the German Government undertook not to violate Belgian integrity and to respect Belgian territory at all times, unless Belgium took part in military action against Germany. Germany also made a similar declaration to that made by the British and French Governments to grant assistance to Belgium if the latter were attacked.

In effect, therefore, Belgium has reached a position of practical neutrality as described under Form (D), subject only to her League obligations. The integrity of Belgian territory is guaranteed by Great Britain and France on the one side and separately by Germany on the other, while she herself is under no obligations towards any of these States beyond those of the League Covenant, (which incidentally she is clearly going to interpret very narrowly so far as article 16 is concerned).

It is doubtful whether the neutralisation of Switzerland is a case of Form (B) or Form (C). Under a declaration of the 20th March, 1815, by eight Powers at the Vienna Congress (Austria, Spain, France, United Kingdom, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Sweden), accepted by the Swiss Confederation on the 27th May and then confirmed by the eight Powers in article 84 of the General Vienna Congress Treaty of the 9th June, 1815, 'all eight Powers accept and guarantee the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland within its new frontiers' as just established. The exact effect of this guarantee, and the question whether it is to be regarded as a joint or several one, are somewhat obscure. In the past it has not been mentioned in the usual statement of the military commitments of this country.

The former neutralisation of Luxemburg is an example of Form (C), since the guarantee was joint only. By the Treaty of London in 1867 the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg was made 'a perpetually neutral State'. It was bound to observe the same neutrality towards all other States. The parties to the treaty (Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Prussia, Russia and the Netherlands) engaged themselves to respect this neutrality, which was 'placed under the sanction of the *collective* guarantee of these Powers' except Belgium, who, being herself a neutral

<sup>4</sup> *Note in the Original:* This replaced a guarantee under article 29 of a treaty of 1831.

State, did not join in the guarantee. There were also provisions that there should be no fortifications in the Duchy and no troops, only police. In the view of His Majesty's Government, this system of neutralization ceased to exist as a result of events arising out of the war.

The Luxemburg Government have started negotiations separately with both France and Germany, with a view to bringing about a situation analogous to that of modern Belgium, i.e. Form (D); Germany and France have been invited to recognise separately Luxemburg's inviolability and guarantee that inviolability against attack by a third party, while Luxemburg for her part, will presumably continue to assert unilaterally her neutralisation as laid down in her Constitution.

### III

It is now necessary to consider which of the four forms of neutralisation discussed above or any modifications of one or other of them might be applied to the case of Czechoslovakia, bearing in mind that the object of neutralising that country is threefold:—

(1) To remove the German grievance against the connexion of Czechoslovakia with France and Russia, which Germany regards as an anti-German combination.

This grievance ought logically to be met if Czechoslovakia were to cancel the undertakings she at present gives to guarantee France and Russia against Germany. Germany ought not to object to the continuance in some form or other of the guarantee given by France and Russia to Czechoslovakia, provided it were generalised and not as at present applicable solely in the case of an attack by Germany on Czechoslovakia. It is to be feared, however, that what Germany really objects to is that Czechoslovakia should have any special treaty relations of a political character whatsoever with either France or Russia.

(2) To provide Czechoslovakia with guarantees for her independence and territorial integrity at least as effective as she now enjoys under her alliances.

In theory no arrangement can furnish such effective guarantees as those Czechoslovakia at present enjoys with her French and Russian treaties. But in practice it could well be argued that in present circumstances the French and Russian guarantees are not enforceable, and that therefore Czechoslovakia will be no worse off with more general and less categorical guarantees than with those which she at present enjoys.

(3) To free France from her present dilemma of either breaking her pledged word or fighting a war in most unfavourable circumstances in the event of German aggression against Czechoslovakia.

In the first three forms of neutralisation considered in Part II the neutralised State gives definite undertakings to some other State or States that she will restrict her foreign policy within such limits as to ensure her permanent neutrality in the case of war between other Powers. Incidentally, this would mean that Czechoslovakia would have to cancel not merely her political agreements with France and Russia, but also those with Yugoslavia and Roumania which constitute the Little Entente. The neutralisation of Czechoslovakia would thus mean the break-up of the Little Entente.

We must also bear in mind that Czechoslovakia may resent as a humiliation having to give formal undertakings of neutrality in treaty form to foreign Governments. Such undertakings too would be difficult to reconcile with Czechoslovakia's League of Nations obligations. Switzerland would afford no precedent. For whereas she has tried to rid herself of these obligations (and has now practically

succeeded in doing so), it is to be expected that Czechoslovakia would adopt just the opposite line and insist on maintaining her League obligations in their entirety, although this would—as Germany would not be slow to point out—be incompatible with her neutralisation.

Apart from these considerations, there is the question as to whom Czechoslovakia should give her undertakings of neutrality. Germany and Hungary (in respect of the Little Entente) are the only countries directly interested in receiving them, but it would be clearly impossible for Czechoslovakia to give these undertakings to Germany and Hungary alone. Nor would the situation be very much better if she gave them to her neighbours, for this would only mean the addition of Poland, who has no particular *locus standi* in the matter. It would seem necessary that Czechoslovakia would have to give these undertakings to all those Powers who may be held to have a direct or indirect interest in the peace of Central Europe. Czechoslovakia would almost certainly insist on Great Britain and France being included, and possibly also Italy and Russia. So long as the process of neutralisation stopped at this point there would presumably be no difficulty with Germany, and the result would be a form of neutralisation as described under Form (A) in Part II.

But it is hardly conceivable that Czechoslovakia will agree to neutralise herself without receiving some sort of guarantee in return, nor, indeed, could France press her to do so. If all the Powers who received Czechoslovakia's undertaking of neutrality were in return to guarantee her independence and integrity, the result would be Form (B) of neutralisation. The practical effect of this would be that France and Russia would, as at present, continue to guarantee Czechoslovakia against Germany, and that Czechoslovakia would in addition obtain similar guarantees from other Powers who do not give them at present, e.g. Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Poland, &c. This, in fact, is the form of neutralisation described under (B) in Part II.

Theoretically, of course, Germany ought to be entirely satisfied with such an arrangement, since it does away with Czechoslovakia's obligation to support France and Russia against a German attack, i.e., the so-called encirclement of Germany. But if, as we suspect, Germany's real object is to sever the whole of Czechoslovakia's political connexion with France and Russia, she would certainly continue to raise objections to France and especially Russia guaranteeing Czechoslovakia's independence. Apart from this, Great Britain would under this system be compelled, as a Power interested in the peace of Central Europe, to guarantee Czechoslovakia. This would involve this country in an entirely new commitment. Nor would such an arrangement release France from her dilemma of either denouncing her pledged word or fighting a war in most unfavourable circumstances.

In view of the difficulty of applying Form (B) in its complete state to the case of Czechoslovakia, it may be worth considering possible modifications. For instance, the guarantees to be given to Czechoslovakia might be collective instead of several as in Form (C). This would in practice mean (assuming the British interpretation of a collective guarantee to be accepted) that, Germany being one of the guarantors, if she violated her guarantee none of the other guarantors would be bound automatically to come to Czechoslovakia's assistance, although, of course, they would be free to do so and might by reason of their guarantee feel that they were under a certain moral, though not legal, obligation. Such a system would reduce Great Britain's new commitment and France's present commitment

to a minimum. For this reason it ought to be welcome to Germany, except that Germany would probably still object to the inclusion of Russia among the guarantors. On the other hand, it would be difficult to persuade Czechoslovakia that there would be any value whatsoever in such a collective guarantee. She would, indeed, probably urge that if the guarantee is to be collective the guarantors should not include any of her neighbours, but should be confined to countries who she has no reason to fear will attack her. But it is hardly likely that Germany would agree to be excluded from the ranks of guarantors of Czechoslovakia's neutrality. Moreover if the guarantors were limited to, say, Great Britain, France and Russia, the chances of Great Britain being called upon to implement her guarantee would be correspondingly increased.

There remains the modified form of neutralisation which Belgium has brought about for her own use within the last two years, i.e., Form (D). If Czechoslovakia, as is probable, would resent as a humiliation the giving of undertakings of neutrality to other Powers, this Belgian model might appeal to her, since Belgium gives no such undertakings, but merely of her own volition so conducts her policy as to produce the effects of neutralisation without the form. Incidentally, this method would have the advantage of leaving Czechoslovakia's League obligations unaffected. On the other hand, the Belgian precedent, by which Belgium is guaranteed by her neighbours, would not, as we have seen, be adequate or suitable in the case of Czechoslovakia. These guarantees would clearly have to be furnished by the Great Powers, and this brings us back again to the difficulties already discussed in the case of Forms (B) and (C).

But perhaps a combination of Forms (C) and (D) might be evolved to suit the particular case of Czechoslovakia. For instance, would a process on the following lines be possible?—

(1) Czechoslovakia would terminate her political treaties with France and Russia and with the other two members of the Little Entente.

(2) The Great Powers, i.e., Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and if possible Russia, and maybe also Poland and Hungary in their capacity as neighbours, would undertake among themselves *individually* to respect Czechoslovakia's independence and integrity, and would *jointly* guarantee that independence and integrity, so long as Czechoslovakia did not assume any political undertakings towards any foreign Government.

(3) In the event of this joint guarantee breaking down because one or other of the signatories refused to collaborate or had violated her undertaking to respect the independence and integrity of Czechoslovakia, then the other signatories would be free to decide individually whether or not they should come to Czechoslovakia's assistance.

In any scheme which may be elaborated it will be important to ensure that whatever obligations may be undertaken by Germany or any other Power, those obligations shall not give those Powers, either singly or jointly, the right or the obligation to guarantee the internal political constitution of Czechoslovakia. In other words, if any of the guarantor States wish to intervene in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, they shall not be able to justify their action by invoking the undertakings given by them in regard to the maintenance of the independence and integrity of Czechoslovakia. Such a safeguard is shown to be necessary by the fact that during the early days of Swiss neutrality, as established by the Treaty of 1815, the Great Powers exercised the right, in virtue of this Treaty, to intervene in the internal affairs of Switzerland.



## APPENDIX V

### Record of a Conversation between Herr Forster<sup>1</sup>, Gauleiter of Danzig, Professor Noe<sup>2</sup> and Sir A. Cadogan.<sup>3</sup>

[c 7061/1941/18].

Gauleiter Forster called upon me this afternoon accompanied by Professor Noe.

The latter gentleman, in introducing the Gauleiter, said that he (Professor Noe) had always felt deeply the importance of good relations between Great Britain and Germany and had noted with regret that the situation at the moment did not appear to be satisfactory. He said he was at a loss to account for this, and asked me if I could make any statement to him on the subject.

I reminded my hearers that an attempt had been made in the early part of this year to have a frank discussion of any difficulties that might be outstanding between Germany and Great Britain, and that conversations had even been begun with that end in view. Unfortunately, those conversations had been interrupted by the 'Anschluss', which had created a profound impression in this country. Whatever the rights or wrongs of the case, there was no doubt that it was very widely felt here that the manner in which the 'Anschluss' was effected was regrettable. At all events, public opinion had been moved, and the atmosphere rendered unfavourable for further conversations, which it had been impossible to renew in the state of tension which had subsequently arisen in regard to the Czechoslovak question. Those were the reasons why an attempt to clear up the situation had been suspended. As to what was at the bottom of whatever mistrust or ill-feeling might exist between the two countries, I said that I could not refrain from referring to various declarations made by responsible people in Germany which emphasised the discontent of Germany with her lot without too clearly defining her grievances or suggesting practicable remedies. That attitude, coupled with the intensive development of German military strength, naturally produced a feeling of uneasiness and insecurity.

Herr Forster said that the two cases to which I had referred of the Austrian 'Anschluss' and the Sudetendeutsch question were entirely different. In the one case, Austria was a Germanic country of which the vast majority of the inhabitants desired to join the Reich; the other case was one of a country (Czechoslovakia) with which the Reich did not wish to interfere but where she was resolved to protect the German minority from ill-treatment and oppression. He then bluntly put the question: What interest had Great Britain in Czechoslovakia?

I replied that our primary interest was the maintenance of peace, and that we were resolved to contribute every possible effort to the finding of a peaceful and reasonable settlement of the question. He must remember also that we, by our signature of the Peace Treaty, contributed to the bringing into existence of the Czechoslovak State, and he must also remember that being Members of the League we also had certain obligations under the Covenant. But I repeated that our primary interest was in the maintenance of peace.

<sup>1</sup> Herr Forster, who was in close relations with Herr Hitler, visited England from the 8th to the 15th July 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Noe was a Director of the International Shipbuilding and Engineering Company of Danzig.

<sup>3</sup> This record was made by Sir A. Cadogan. Copies of the report were sent by the Foreign Office to H. M. Missions at Berlin, Danzig, Paris, Prague and Warsaw.



Herr Forster asked me what information we had as to Soviet interference in Czechoslovakia. His Government knew that the Czechoslovak aerodromes were at the disposal of the Soviet, who had already sent large numbers of bombing planes. This had undoubtedly encouraged the Czechoslovak Government, and he complained of their mobilisation in May, of the flight of Czech aircraft over German territory and of various Czech violations of the German frontier.

I said that Herr Forster's Government appeared to have more information than we had in regard to Soviet air reinforcements for Czechoslovakia. In regard to the Czech mobilisation, I could only say that the Czechoslovak Government, rightly or wrongly, felt that the independence of their State was threatened, and that they had taken measures which they considered it to be their duty to take in that event. In any case the German Government could hardly feel themselves threatened or feel that Germany was exposed to aggression on the part of Czechoslovakia.

Herr Forster said that Germany had no fear on that score; the Führer had kept his head and no sort of counter-measures had been taken. He could assure me that no measures whatever had been taken in response to what the Czechoslovak Government had done.

I said that I hoped that the German Government were ready to believe that His Majesty's Government and the French Government were both doing their best, by using the influence they possessed at Prague, to work for an agreed solution of the difficulty. I felt bound to add, however, that any solution must be a complicated business involving many difficult technical questions, and the Czechoslovak Government had their own difficulties to contend with. It was therefore essential to have some patience and give time for an agreed settlement to be worked out.

Herr Forster asked me whether the English people still believed in self-determination. I said that certainly we adhered to that principle, to which Herr Forster replied that there would seem to be some contradiction in our attitude.

I said that I was not aware of any contradiction unless he meant that acceptance of the principle of self-determination was incompatible with our belief that a plebiscite could not in all circumstances usefully or successfully be held or give a good result. If people in Germany considered that there should be a plebiscite in the Sudeten area, that was in contradiction with the attitude adopted towards the proposal to hold a plebiscite in Austria. Herr Forster indulged in a long harangue, the effect of which was that the Führer had never done anything without obtaining an expression of the general will, and all his acts had been overwhelmingly confirmed by the people's vote.

I observed that the more normal technique was for action to follow rather than to precede a plebiscite.

Herr Forster then said that he would like to put to me what might appear to be an unpleasant question. If I were a German, how would I regard all these questions? Or rather, perhaps he would put the question the other way round—What would I as an Englishman think if England were in Germany's position? I said that I thought it would be better if I answered the question in the first form in which he had put it. I could quite understand, if I were a German and had been taught for years now that my country was receiving unfair treatment, that I should have acquired a sense of indignation that might blur my judgment. Living in Germany, where feelings were worked up by the press and other methods, I should doubtless feel exactly as Herr Forster did.

At this point Professor Noe indulged in a long diatribe against the injustices to which the Sudetendeutsch had for 20 years been subjected. I observed that on

this point our two Governments were agreed. We were certainly resolved to do everything that might be possible to remove any injustice from which the German minority might be suffering, and I repeated that we were straining every effort to that end. On the other hand, patience and a degree of understanding were necessary on the other side.

Herr Forster gave me the usual assurances that the Führer's one idea was peace and his one object to live on better terms with this country. He (Herr Forster) hoped that if the Sudetendeutsch question could be peacefully settled the situation would be more favourable for a resumption of an exchange of views between Germany and Great Britain. There were really no questions at issue between the two countries. I observed that there was the colonial question, which the German Government had raised, but Herr Forster brushed this aside and declared that that was a matter which could be easily settled. I was content not to pursue that subject.

Professor Noe reiterated that everyone in Germany wanted peace and that no one thought of war. He had been disturbed on finding many people in responsible positions in England who seemed obsessed with the idea that war was inevitable. He could not understand why this was so and he feared that it was very dangerous.

I said that if anyone in England expected war no one imagined that we should be the first to start it. Peace was our greatest interest and we were not likely to break it. But I referred to what I had already said about certain declarations in Germany and about Germany's general attitude, which caused uneasiness amongst her neighbours and perhaps throughout Europe.

Herr Forster repeated his assurances about Herr Hitler's desire for peace and his peaceful schemes of reconstruction in Germany. I said that I fully accepted what Herr Forster had said to me on that point. Herr Hitler was probably a man who understood that there were greater victories to be won in peace than in war.

Though the Gauleiter spoke quite frankly, and though I at times allowed myself to do the same, the whole interview was on a friendly note and Herr Forster was good-tempered throughout.

(Initialled). A. C.

14 July, 1938